

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ORTHODOXY AND ECUMENISM:
TOWARDS ACTIVE *METANOIA*

RAZVAN PORUMB

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of Anglia Ruskin University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This research programme was carried out
in collaboration with the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge

Submitted: July 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Dr Zoë Bennett and Rev Dr Jeremy Morris who supervised this research project. Their constant and enduring support, encouragement and unfailing humbling faith in this project have ultimately constituted the inspiration and motivation that have made it possible.

I also wish to thank the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, all my colleagues there, and in particular the Principal, Professor David Frost, for all his support and countless valuable comments and suggestions along the way. Many thanks also to Mrs Sasha Anisimova-Witt and Dr Meera Juncu for their invaluable feedback.

Special thanks are due to Father Michael Harper, of blessed memory, and to Mrs Jeanne Harper without whose help, encouragement, inspiration and heartfelt commitment to the theme of my research this study would not have been achievable. It is to these wonderful ecumenical believers that this work is dedicated.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my wife, Claudia, whose abiding trust and patience have seen this project to its completion.

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW & SOCIAL SCIENCES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ORTHODOXY AND ECUMENISM:
TOWARDS ACTIVE *METANOIA*

RAZVAN PORUMB

July 2014

The questions that underlined and motivated this research project have been: *Why* do members of the Orthodox Church participate in the ecumenical movement, and *how* can they negotiate an involvement in ecumenical contexts, together with their non-Orthodox counterparts – considering that the Orthodox see their Church as the one and only true Church? The background of this exploration has been the context of hostility and prejudice, which some groups within the Orthodox Church have manifested towards ecumenical encounters, which has marred and obstructed a genuine dialogue between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox Christian communities.

This project is based on the analysis of sources from contemporary Orthodox and Western theological milieux. It has interpreted these sources with a view to determining how they interact and coalesce into visions that inform the relationship between Orthodoxy and ecumenism. The interpretative stage of the discussion reveals the necessity of delineating paradigms for Orthodoxy and ecumenism that will enable future ecumenical interactions of greater efficiency and integrity.

Such paradigms outline a vision wherein central aspects of Orthodox theology would move away from a paradigm of 'passive conservatism' to one of 'active *metanoia*' (transformation), while ecumenism would come to be seen as a perennial process and intrinsic aspect of theology. These vantage points define a new Orthodox vision of ecumenism as an ever-enlarging catholicity, by bringing back to the fore the common theological core of both Orthodoxy and ecumenism.

Key words:

Orthodoxy, Orthodox Church, Ecumenism, Orthodox Theology, Ecumenical Theology.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: ORTHODOXY AND THE ORTHODOX.....	8
1.1. Orthodox/Orthodoxy. Historical appearance and development of the term	10
1.2. The Orthodox – non-Orthodox antinomy	19
1.2.1. ‘Orthodoxy’ versus ‘non-Orthodoxy’	20
1.2.2. Orthodoxy as ‘exclusive’ unity	23
1.2.3. Orthodoxy as sacramental/Eucharistic communion.	26
1.3. The Orthodox Church as inheritor and continuator of tradition.....	29
1.3.1. <i>The tension between tradition and Tradition</i>	29
1.3.2. <i>Orthodoxy as a ‘breathing’ tradition</i>	30
1.4. The Journey after the Schism	34
1.4.1. <i>The constant fight for survival</i>	35
1.4.2. <i>Internal disagreements</i>	39
1.4.3. <i>Nationalism</i>	42
CHAPTER TWO: ECUMENISM	46
2.1. Ecumenism – a brief historical outline	46
2.1.1. <i>The origins of modern ecumenism</i>	48
2.1.2. <i>The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference</i>	50
2.1.3. <i>Faith and Order</i>	51
2.1.4. <i>Life and Work</i>	53
2.1.5. <i>The Orthodox initiative</i>	54
2.1.6. <i>The Anglican ‘Appeal to All Christian People’</i>	56
2.1.7. <i>The World Council of Churches</i>	57
2.1.8. <i>Reflections on the beginnings of the ecumenical movement</i>	61
2.1.9. <i>Roman-Catholic participation in the ecumenical movement</i>	68
2.1.10. <i>The Special Commission on Orthodox Participation within the WCC</i>	72
2.2. Ecumenism and theology	75
2.2.1. <i>Ecumenism as quest for unity</i>	75

2.2.2. <i>Ecumenism as a spiritual state</i>	77
2.2.3. <i>Ecumenism as theology and action</i>	78
2.2.4. <i>Ecumenism as return to the One Church</i>	80
2.2.5. <i>Ecumenism as permanent calling to all theology and ongoing process</i>	83
2.2.6. <i>Ecumenism as participatory endeavour, theological and spiritual process</i>	89
2.2.7. <i>Ecumenism and (pre-) methodology</i>	97
CHAPTER THREE: ORTHODOXY AND ECUMENISM	101
3.1. The Predicament	102
3.2. The simple rationale	106
3.2.1. <i>The Orthodox Church is the one true Church</i>	107
3.2.2. <i>There can be only one true Church of Christ. Churches that are not Orthodox are outside the one true Church.</i>	108
3.2.3. <i>Reunion of Christians would mean re-joining the one true Church</i>	108
3.3. Anti-ecumenical positions from the Orthodox	110
3.3.1. <i>The Protestant ethos, the 'parallel' ecclesiology, the 'dilution' and 'double-thought' of Orthodox ecclesiological understanding</i>	112
3.3.2. <i>Radical positions</i>	118
3.4. Non-Orthodox errors – The Thyateira Confession	122
3.4.1. <i>Loss and Neglect of the Holy Tradition</i>	124
3.4.2. <i>Interruption of Apostolic Continuation</i>	127
3.4.3. <i>Denying Honour to Saints</i>	128
3.4.4. <i>The Purely Scholarly Interpretation of The Bible</i>	128
3.4.5. <i>The Sacrament of the Eucharist</i>	129
3.5. 'Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox'	131
3.6. Four main points for reflection	140
3.6.1. <i>The Orthodox Church is the Church.</i>	140
3.6.2. <i>Unity as reconstitution of the One Church</i>	141
3.6.3. <i>Inside/outside the Church</i>	142
3.6.4. <i>Orthodoxy as matrix for unity</i>	144

CHAPTER FOUR: NEW PARADIGMS	148
4.1. Revisiting the themes.....	148
4.2. The Orthodox mission for humanity	153
4.3. Four essential themes.....	160
4.3.1. <i>Journeying together. The ongoing engagement</i>	162
4.3.2. <i>Unity as core of Christian life and identity</i>	167
4.3.3. <i>Ecumenism as spiritual enterprise</i>	170
4.3.4. <i>Ecumenism as koinonia of diversities</i>	172
4.4. Reflections on the paradigms proposed above	177
4.4.1. <i>Theology as aspiration</i>	177
4.4.2. <i>The consubstantial humanity</i>	179
CONCLUSION	186
1. <i>The study</i>	186
2. <i>Orthodoxy and the Orthodox</i>	187
3. <i>Ecumenism</i>	189
4. <i>Orthodoxy and Ecumenism</i>	193
5. <i>New Paradigms</i>	197
6. <i>The Thesis</i>	201
7. <i>Possible directions</i>	203
BIBLIOGRAPHY	207

COPYRIGHT

Attention is drawn to the fact that copyright of this thesis rests with

(i) Anglia Ruskin University for one year and thereafter with

(ii) George Razvan Porumb

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is bound by copyright.

Abbreviations

WCC	The World Council of Churches
JATE	Journal of Adult Theological Education
IOCS	The Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies
OCA	Orthodox Church in America
ROCOR	Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

INTRODUCTION

Starting as an Orthodox participant in an ecumenical, inter-Christian context can often be a frustrating, sore experience. The expectations for Orthodox participants from their local hierarchies are habitually that they are to witness Orthodoxy and the tradition of the One True Orthodox Church to the non-Orthodox, that they are to defend the Truth of faith in a rather ominous unfamiliar place, and that they are never to yield to any compromise, doctrinal or otherwise. The presence of the Orthodox – often in a minority – in such encounters is bound to trigger a degree of surprise, bafflement or commotion. If in luck, such specimens might get the benefit of being treated with benevolent curiosity as interesting additions by their Western counterparts, or as naive idealists by their gently condescending Orthodox brethren. At worst, Protestants will see such Orthodox participants with suspicious eyes, defensively anticipating haughty or inflexible attitudes, while the more uncompromising among the Orthodox will automatically manifest severe distrust, or even label them as heretics or traitors to the Church.

Many Orthodox initially approach ecumenical contexts with genuine commitment and enthusiasm as a chance to heal schism. However, making friends in such places seems like a tricky thing for them. Would that not impair their ability to discern between truth and fallacy? Would they still be able to detect ulterior motives and erroneous ways, if they get entangled in such ‘sentimental’ liaisons? They had better refrain altogether from bringing the concept of love – Christian, human or otherwise – as viable argument. The more rigorous among the Orthodox will deem them immediately as irresponsible idealists, accuse them of immature, shallow romanticism, or ‘naked sentimentality’.¹

Orthodox representatives tend to freeze under the enormous pressure of all these expectations. Their task seems incredibly difficult and their responsibility enormous, the ecumenical context seems complex and unintelligible, while their ecumenical involvement often fuels growing suspicion back in their home communities. They need to make a decision fast whether they have what it takes to remain a part of this treacherous environment. A high degree of political skill and diplomacy alongside an expert knowledge of the Orthodox theological tradition are required from the ideal Orthodox candidate, a skilled ability to manoeuvre between sentiment and reasoning,

¹ Phrase coined by Father Justin Popovich, in *Orthodox faith and life in Christ* (Belmont, MA: Institute of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1994), p. 170.

between apparently contradictory understandings and views. Such unfortunate Darwinian selection has given birth to an oddly adapted, ambidextrous, double-minded, ecumenical creature, distrusted to some extent both by the Orthodox and the Western. The associated ambivalent stance – acknowledging both the Orthodox Church as one, but also serving the multitude of Christian Churches worldwide – was deemed as ‘double speak’ by one of the Orthodox anti-ecumenical writers, who placed it in the same category as schizophrenia.²

It was in the first-hand experience of this frustration, pain and disingenuousness that this study has found its impetus and motivation. The starting question underlying this theological exploration is: *Why* do the Orthodox participate in the ecumenical movement, and *how* can they negotiate an involvement in the ecumenical movement – considering that the Orthodox see their Church as *the only one true Church*? The initial premise of this study, however, is that there is *another way* for the ecumenical operation, for the Orthodox to approach and become engaged in ecumenical activities. The aim of this research is to explore the tension ever-present in inter-Christian environments between Orthodoxy and ecumenism, between the vision of Orthodoxy as the One True Church, self-sufficient and whole, and a vision of Orthodoxy as a humble, pastoral, outreaching reality in a fragmented pluralistic world.

A similar study acknowledging and exploring at length these tensions has not been done before, or if it has this exploration has not managed to identify it. Research on this theme is scarce as it runs counter to a prevailing attitude in Orthodox circles to avoid or marginalise the topic of ecumenism as inflammatory, or even as an attack or betrayal to the Church establishment. Such research is nevertheless all the more necessary given the context of hostility and intolerance which some groups within the Orthodox Church manifest towards ecumenical encounters, which has marred and prevented a genuine constructive dialogue between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christian communities.

The contribution of this study will be to present in parallel the themes of Orthodoxy and ecumenism, their interaction on the theological realm, and to seek new theological angles which would enable an honest, unforced and responsible participation of the Orthodox. This research attempts to contribute to a deeper renewed understanding of the way the Orthodox view Orthodoxy, but also to present a new vision of ecumenism

2 Patrick Barnes, ‘Ecumenist "Double Speak". The Ecclesiological Schizophrenia of the Orthodox Ecumenists’, accessed on 11 October 2011, <http://www.Orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/doublespeak.aspx>.

of greater clarity and credibility for the Orthodox participants and for all ecumenical actors. It will also seek to delineate new reception paradigms for Orthodoxy and ecumenism, where central aspects of Orthodox theology would move away from a paradigm of 'passive conservatism' to one of 'active transformation', while ecumenism would need to gradually become a part of the inner life of the Church and not merely an external 'diplomatic' reality.

The first chapter explores the meaning of Orthodoxy beyond the customary view that the Orthodox Church is the one true Church of the apostolic times, and uncovers a vision of Orthodoxy as the way of life in Christ, the fullness of truth which, by its inherent inner structure, seeks to make itself known in the world – and not merely an ecclesial jurisdiction or a set of doctrines. As will be demonstrated, the Orthodox have been keeping alive a spirit of energy and action, a vision of Tradition as 'a dynamic process of continuity and renewal in the Holy Spirit'.³

Moving on, in the second chapter, to the modern-history phenomenon known as the 'ecumenical movement', this study will explore ecumenism essentially as a dynamic, active enterprise, a renewal-centred process – a vision maintaining ecumenism in the practical, participatory sphere of personal active involvement. The language of spiritual participation is one which the Orthodox understand well and which can offer a useful background for the participation of the Orthodox in ecumenical processes. Moreover, of even greater relevance to this exploration, will be the implication that ecumenism is a constant aspect of theology, as its goal is to constantly 'maintain unity and to counter division'.⁴

In addressing, in its third chapter, the relationship between Orthodoxy and ecumenism, past and present, this study will investigate the view that, even if the Orthodox Church sees itself as *the* Church, preserving the fullness of the early Church in all its original plenitude, it nevertheless acknowledges a special status for those communities which once belonged to the whole Christian world, whom it calls back to the unity of the Church. However, Orthodoxy is not only 'something that the Orthodox suggest that others attain, but they also demand it of themselves', the implication being that 'other Christians also embark on this path and that we can work together on this way.'⁵ Moreover, if the Orthodox Church is not keen to assume part of the

3 Daniel Ciobotea (Metropolitan), *Confessing the truth in love. Orthodox perceptions of life, mission and unity* (Iasi: Trinitas, 2001), p. 157.

4 G. R. Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology: the lessons so far* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p 19.

5 Philip Riabikh (Hegumen), 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Ecumenism', in *Journal of ecumenical studies*, 46:3, Summer 2011, p. 357.

responsibility for the historical schisms, it nevertheless assumes full responsibility for reuniting the Church, as it affirms that it has alone maintained the unaltered truth of faith, and the structure of the Church of Christ.

In the fourth chapter, this study will seek to outline paradigms for Orthodoxy and ecumenism founded on a different ethos and functioning parameters that would enable a more plenary ecumenical operation, especially bearing in mind the participation of the Orthodox Church. This research does not aim to delineate the precise workings of ecumenical processes, nor to prescribe methodologies for the mechanics of such processes, but it focuses on a preliminary vision, a 'pre-methodology' informing and preparing the ecumenical actors prior to their ecumenical exposure.

A qualitative approach is employed in what follows, producing research that is eminently exploratory and analytical. The project focuses on the period commencing, roughly, with the start of the ecumenical movement around the turn of the last century and up until the present day. Documents presented for analysis, whether theological writings or official documents issued by representatives of the Churches, are taken primarily from this period. Research relies entirely on textual analysis and interpretation of contemporary Orthodox and Western sources pertinent to the theme of this study.

Data in the form of a significant number of definitions, views and opinions has been collected, in order to illuminate the particular contexts and situations relevant to the topic under discussion. This constitutes the literature review part of the project; it focuses on Orthodoxy and ecumenism, in turn, and on the interaction between the two themes. At the same time, this part engages in an analytical interpretation of the sources, with a view to determining how they interact and coalesce into visions that inform the relationship between Orthodoxy and ecumenism. The analysis prepares the ground for the later interpretative stage of the discussion, which deals with the paradigms for Orthodoxy and ecumenism that will enable future ecumenical interactions of greater efficiency and integrity.

A preliminary note should be made at this point regarding the term 'ecumenism'. It is fair to say that after the many decades of a 'remarkably consistent unease of the

Orthodox Churches' in ecumenical environments⁶, 'ecumenism' has become a term largely distrusted and 'tainted' even within the less conservative circles of the Orthodox world. 'A great deal of criticism of ecumenical work has been accumulated in the Orthodox milieu', observes an official of the Russian Church. 'For the Orthodox, the very notion of "ecumenism" often means a totality of alien theories and methods which the Orthodox are forced to accept.'⁷ He then adds that 'the Moscow Patriarchate prefers today to use the terms "inter-Christian dialogue" and "inter-Christian relations" rather than the notion of "ecumenism."⁸ The seminal Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983) also expressed some while back a preference for the term 'missionary' to the term 'ecumenical', as he found the word 'ecumenical' too 'general and ambiguous' and in need of being 'redefined'.⁹

Indeed, while the Orthodox are not generally averse to the idea of 'inter-Christian' relations, it is likely that they will react more violently against the notion of 'ecumenism'. This has to do undoubtedly with what the Orthodox have come to associate this term with over the years: an 'alien' unfamiliar environment wherein theories and methodologies were imposed on the Orthodox, a context the ethos of which is seen as irremediably compromised. Following the global impasse and weakening of the ecumenical movement in recent decades, the term has almost acquired a taboo character in Orthodox circles – and has arguably lost much of its cachet in Western contexts too. It may thus appear safer for this study to have utilised the term 'inter-Christian', particularly as it tackles primarily the Orthodox context.

However, even if this study identifies the ecumenical movement as imperfect, due mostly to the rushed establishment of its theological foundation, it does not see the first ecumenical century as a 'mistake'. Its evolution, although anticlimactic, is seen as part of the perennial process towards Church unity – which is bound to have both highs and lows – and not as a failed project. It would have been thus disingenuous to avoid the terms 'ecumenism' or 'ecumenical movement'. Moreover, this study is steering towards the discovery of a fresh starting vision that could potentially lead to a resolution of the ecumenical crisis, chiefly with regard to Orthodox participation. The hope of this research is that the ecumenical movement will continue in a renewed state

⁶ Under the section 'Why a Special Commission?', on the 'Frequently Asked Questions' website of the World Council of Churches, accessed on 1 May 2012, <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/special-faqs-e.html>

⁷ Riabykh, 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Ecumenism', p. 354.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Alexander Schmemmann, *Church, world, mission. Reflections on Orthodoxy in the west* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979), p. 123.

by employing fresh theological parameters and methodologies, and so will Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement. Thus if the ecumenical quest towards Church unity will be rehabilitated, so will hopefully be the term that came to define it. Besides, the word 'ecumenical' has a special significance for the Orthodox, as it is used to define the seven early Ecumenical Councils of the Church which are believed to have shaped the Orthodox Church as it exists today. The term pointed back then, not unlike today, to the intrinsic drive of the Christians to keep the Church as One by countering schism and division.

The focus of the discussion in the following chapters will be on the 'modern ecumenical movement', a concept which is used throughout to differentiate from the more general understanding of ecumenism as a continuous aspiration and activity of the Church, its origins going back to the time of Christ, the Apostles and the early Church. Although this study will indeed refer back to the core of the Christian faith in its Biblical expression and in the understanding of the tradition of the Church, its main focus will remain the recent phenomenon involving most of the Churches worldwide and known as 'the ecumenical movement'.

Finally, a note regarding the Orthodox sources which will be used in this study: the research will focus almost exclusively on texts coming from the Eastern Orthodox context, which recognizes the Council of Chalcedon (451) and the totality of the seven Ecumenical Councils, and not on sources belonging to the Oriental 'non-Chalcedonian' Orthodox Churches. Eastern Orthodoxy is itself a rather heterogeneous reality, but one, at least, wherein Eucharistic communion conveys and ensures an essential underlying doctrinal and theological unity. Operating outside this unity, the similar ethos and theology of the Oriental Churches notwithstanding, would make the task of this study excessively complex.

Moreover, from among the Eastern Orthodox sources this project will concentrate on those belonging to the European context (Russia, Greece and the other European autocephalous Churches), and also on the Constantinopolitan See, the OCA and the American diasporas. Sadly, it has not been possible to investigate sources originating from the Middle-Eastern context (Antioch, Alexandria or Jerusalem) because of the lack of available relevant material. Also, besides the relative similarity (historical, cultural and otherwise) of the Euro-American perimeter, this decision has also been informed by the arguably more central role that the Churches in these regions have played in the ecumenical movement since its inception in the 20th century.

Nevertheless, the role played by the Middle-Eastern Orthodox Churches in the ecumenical movement, both Eastern and Oriental, should in no way be minimised and it would certainly require – perhaps renewed – specialised focus and research.

CHAPTER ONE: ORTHODOXY AND THE ORTHODOX

Without aiming to exhaust the theme, this study will begin by approaching 'Orthodoxy' and 'the Orthodox Church' and the way these terms and realities are understood from within the communities of the Orthodox Church – and this is, in general lines, what this first chapter will focus on. It will attempt to achieve this mainly by exploring the views of a number of modern or contemporary theologians belonging to the Orthodox tradition. It will concentrate however on those particular aspects of 'Orthodoxy' which are of relevance to the overall scope of this study: the way the Orthodox relate to the other Christians, to ecumenical interactions and conversations, and the way they understand their participation in the ecumenical movement.

Although the terms 'Orthodoxy' and 'the Orthodox Church' are used interchangeably in literature and the Orthodox Church is often referred to as 'Orthodoxy', especially in specialized theological contexts, this study will focus on what 'Orthodox' and 'Orthodoxy' mean, as these are the main defining characteristics of the Orthodox Church. Orthodox theology is keen to present the Orthodox Church or Orthodoxy as a complex reality and as a way of life and much more than just an institution. In the words of two important Orthodox theologians, Sergius Bulgakov and John Zizioulas:

'Orthodoxy is the Church of Christ on earth. The Church of Christ is not an institution; it is a new life with Christ and in Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit.'¹

'The Church is not simply an institution. She is a "mode of existence", a way of being. The mystery of the Church, even in its institutional dimension, is deeply bound to the very being of God.'²

Moreover, Orthodoxy is seen as more than simply a doctrinal entity, but as a community or communion growing mystically together in the image and likeness of Christ. Orthodox British academic John Anthony McGuckin warns against any reductionist perceptions of Orthodoxy by other Christians: 'Orthodoxy is often approached by those outside it as a system of doctrines. But it is far more than this. [...] Orthodoxy is the living mystery of Christ's presence in the world: a resurrectional power of life. The Orthodox Church is, essentially, his [Christ's] community of disciples trying to grow into his image and likeness, by their mystical assimilation to the Master who abides among them.'³

1 Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), p. 1.

2 John D. Zizioulas, *Being as communion. Studies in personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), p. 15.

3 John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: an introduction to its history, doctrine, and spiritual culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. xi.

Such nuanced and complex understandings of Orthodoxy offer a fertile field for research, despite some other (self-) definitions of Orthodoxy appearing, at first sight, somewhat rigid. When Orthodox theologians attempt to define their identity and the concepts of 'Orthodox' or 'Orthodoxy' they seem to approach it from two main viewpoints: 1. *Orthodoxy seen as a concept antinomic to non-Orthodoxy or heterodoxy*; and 2. *Orthodoxy seen as inheritance of and connection to the past*, more exactly the Apostolic age and the early centuries of the Church. However, Orthodox scholars are at the same time eager to point out that Orthodoxy is not defined merely as the right alternative to 'heterodoxies', but is a concept preceding the appearance of heresies, having its own internal logic and dynamics. Also they are keen to emphasize that tradition is not only an inheritance and a connection with the past, but a continuous, dynamic reality inspired by the constant work of the Holy Spirit inside the Church. These internal tensions will be explored in the following pages.

This chapter will first approach the historical appearance of the terms 'Orthodox' and 'Orthodoxy' and their development throughout the centuries. This section will follow the development of the term from its emergence as a reaction to heresies, to denote the two sides of a separation – which led initially to two 'orthodoxies' – down to its signifying the Eastern part of the later Great Schism, when it became also an opposite to 'Catholicism' – not as a concept, but as another ecclesial reality perceived as deficient.

The study will then focus on the first of the two viewpoints described above, whereby Orthodox theologians define Orthodoxy as a concept antinomic to 'heresy' or 'heterodoxy', or, simply, to 'non-Orthodoxy'. This section will further identify that, in seeing themselves as 'right' in the face of other 'erroneous' groups, Orthodox theologians sometimes go further and see these 'groups' as being, in fact, *outside the Church*. According to these views, the Orthodox Church does not really see the Church as a fragmented reality, but sees itself as the one Church of the Apostolic era. This study thus presents this view of a somewhat 'exclusivist' unity of the 'una sancta', and then goes further and reveals the self-understanding of the Orthodox Church as a communion or community centred around sacramental life – in which the Eucharist plays a pivotal role. As the concept of *theosis* is essential in informing the sacramental life of the Orthodox Church, the Church appears as a communion of deification.

This chapter will proceed to tackle – according to the second viewpoint presented above, of Orthodoxy seen as inheritance of and connection to the past – the Apostolic

age and the early centuries of the Church, the Orthodox Church as a continuator of tradition. The understanding of tradition(s) though differs significantly from Tradition (with a capital T) and the ensuing tension will be explored next. This analysis will reveal Tradition, and consequently all life within the Church, as a dynamic, living and 'breathing' reality, constantly informed by the work of the Holy Spirit and immersed within the life and structure of the Trinity. Life in the Church, as again informed by the dynamics of *theosis*, is seen as a journey *towards theosis*, towards acquiring the life that partakes in the Trinitarian life.

The last section of this chapter will be devoted to the historical journey of the Orthodox Church after the period of the Great Schism. This cursory survey will focus on a number of themes that have characterised the journey of the Eastern Orthodox Churches from the times of the Ottoman occupation and up to this day.

The explorations of this chapter will paint the picture of an Orthodoxy and an Orthodox Church that lives as a dynamic community, continuously adding to and renewing Tradition, not only as inherited experience or as a body of written work, but as continuous life and experience in the Holy Spirit. This communion is seen as travelling towards deification, being informed by the life in the sacraments and around the Eucharist, and thus constantly rediscovering and refreshing its Orthodoxy. This paradigm will be of particular importance and relevance to this study further on.

1.1. Orthodox/Orthodoxy. Historical appearance and development of the term

The historical origin and appearance of the term 'Orthodox' is usually placed rather vaguely in the era surrounding, or immediately following the seven Ecumenical Councils. This places the term in direct opposition to the concept of 'heresy' and the 'heterodox' groups in the Church. It was the appearance and massive popular appeal of various emerging challenging views counter to the mainstream doctrine of the Church that led to the convening of the Councils, the main reason of which was precisely to reject the false teachings, to spell out clearly what the Truth of faith was and to promote and even enforce 'Orthodoxy'. It is true that the term 'Orthodox' had been used before the Councils but again as a reaction and counterbalance to the early heresies. However, in those very early days of pre-imperial Christianity, Orthodoxy was expressed through the force of theological or philosophical arguments alone and not through decrees backed by the imperial power.

Some writers speak of an even earlier vision of 'Orthodoxy' – a 'latent' reality not yet uttered distinctly. In fact one can go as far back as the Pauline letters, which anticipated

in a sense the appearance of heresies, or even to Christ Himself who gave a few hints in that general direction.

Historical definitions and understandings of the terms 'Orthodox' and 'Orthodoxy' are diverse. In the *Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity*, the Orthodox Greek scholar George Bebis gives the following explanation:

The terms 'Orthodox' and 'Orthodoxy' (from the Greek *orthos*, 'right,' and *doxa*, 'opinion' or 'doctrine') appeared in the fourth century A.D., and became common to refer to 'true doctrine' and 'true practice.' The term Orthodox Church now refers to those churches also known as the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Catholic Church, or the Greek Orthodox Church [...] Orthodox in this modern sense contrasts with Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Nestorian and Coptic Churches of the east. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381) defined the Church as 'one, holy, catholic, and apostolic' without the use of the term 'Orthodox' because it and other creeds were themselves a definition of what right doctrine was. The terminology of the Orthodox Church arose (e.g. Justinian, Cod. 1.5.21⁴) in contrast to positions defined by the ancient church as heretical.⁵

A very 'standard' definition, Bebis' entry presents some very interesting views. The emergence of 'Orthodoxy' as an operational term is placed in the period of the Councils and in contrast to heresies. However, the author strengthens the link between 'Orthodoxy' and conciliar decrees even further. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed does not define the Church as being 'Orthodox' since the Creed itself was a definition of the correct doctrine. In other words, a part of what was to make the Church 'Orthodox' – spelling out the correct doctrine – was this very Creed. The Church had had a doctrine even before the Creed and that doctrine had been correct, yet there was no need to define 'Orthodoxy' until the first Council of Nicaea (325). The fact that the Council spelled out the right doctrine, with a special emphasis on what is correct (and what not) may constitute the beginning of 'Orthodoxy' as it is understood by many in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Bebis also makes a point in identifying a modern meaning of Orthodoxy 'now', whereby the term 'contrasts with Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Nestorian and Coptic Churches of the east.' He thus acknowledges a 'contrast' between today's Orthodox Church and all the other Churches, but he also

4 The author refers here to Codex Justinianus (Code of Justinian); the referenced decree states that: 'Concerning Heretics And Manichaeans And Samaritans: Since many judges, in deciding cases, have addressed us in need of our decision, asking that they be informed what ought to be done with witnesses who are heretics, whether their testimony ought to be received or rejected, we therefore ordain that no heretic, nor even they who cherish the Jewish superstition, may offer testimony against Orthodox Christians who are engaged in litigation, whether one or the other of the parties is an Orthodox Christian. But a Jew may offer testimony on behalf of an Orthodox Christian against some one who is not Orthodox'. Accessed on 2 May 2011, http://community-2.webtv.net/Tales_of_the_Western_World/RLJUSTINIAN/

5 George S. Bebis, 'Orthodox Church', in *Encyclopaedia of early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), p. 841.

implies that the original term did not present such antinomy, and the term did not acknowledge any schism or division.

Another Orthodox theologian presents a more precise description: 'The term 'Orthodox', writes McGuckin, came into popular usage in the Eastern Christian world as a descriptor of the Church communities in the sixth century, to distinguish those who accepted the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon (451) from those who refused them.' McGuckin goes on to say that the term:

... grew up as a party term, therefore meant to distinguish the Byzantine Christians (and the Latins along with them) from those dissenting from the Christological settlement of Chalcedon. In subsequent times the anti-Chalcedonian churches of the East have also adopted the epithet, applying it in its wider patriotic sense of 'true to the correct opinion' or 'proper in faith.' Thus most churches of the East have the word 'Orthodox' in their descriptive title.⁶

Two important aspects are evident in the above paragraph: the emergence of the term 'Orthodox' was closely connected with the Council of Chalcedon (451); secondly, the term was initially applied both by the Oriental Churches and by the mainstream Church, in other words, by both sides of the schism.

Chalcedon brought the first major schism in the Church, triggered essentially by a Christological dispute. While twenty years earlier the Council of Ephesus had proclaimed that Christ, though divine as well as human, is only one being, the Council of Chalcedon declared that Christ is in two complete natures, one human and one divine. Seen as dangerously similar to the Nestorian heresy condemned at the previous Council, whereby Christ was two distinct beings, one divine and one human, the Oriental Churches rejected the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon. This led this time not only to the isolation of some heretical groups but to the separation of a number of major Churches.

The greater the attack on the accepted doctrine of the Church, the greater its propensity to proclaim its 'Orthodoxy'. It thus makes sense that during this time of rather confusing theological views, 'Orthodoxy' as a term took off. The trouble this time was that there now appeared two 'Orthodoxies' since each side accused the other of heresy and of departing from Orthodoxy with equal vehemence. This situation has continued up until today, though the fervour of the polemic has subsided considerably. As the Orthodox contributor to the Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity put it: 'Despite repeated endeavours to heal the breach from Chalcedon on, there have existed

⁶ John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: an introduction to its history, doctrine, and spiritual culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 24-25.

in Eastern Christianity two Orthodoxies, one accepting the council's ecumenical authority, the other rejecting it.'⁷ Similarly David Bell speaks of 'two Orthodox families' and points out the Chalcedonian/non-Chalcedonian distinction.⁸ From a non-Orthodox perspective Anglican scholar John Binns presents the situation very clearly thus:

Division occurred especially after the Council of Chalcedon (451). Those who supported its decisions (Byzantine Greeks, and then later Russians and other East European Churches) called themselves Orthodox – and still do – while those who opposed the Council (among them Copts or Egyptians, and Syrians) also called themselves Orthodox – and they still do too. Then, a few centuries later, the next major controversy to divide the Church occurred, which was between West and East. The Christians of the East continued to call themselves Orthodox – but now in contrast to the Western Christians, who came to call themselves Catholic. This usage became increasingly accepted, and by 1600 it was possible to speak of the Orthodox Church and to mean the Greek or Eastern Church.⁹

As far as the Eastern Orthodox Churches are concerned, states the Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity, they 'are defined positively *by their adherence to the dogmatic definitions of the seven councils*, by a strong sense of being not a sect or denomination but simply the continuing Christian Church, and despite their varied origins, by adherence to the Byzantine rite.'¹⁰ Or as writes McGuckin, Orthodoxy signifies 'those Churches that are in communion with one another because they share the same faith, in which is included the acceptance of the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon, within the totality of the seven Ecumenical Councils.'¹¹ The author describes here the Chalcedonian type of Orthodoxy, which the Orthodox Church – it is implied – is a continuator of.

What is then the other 'Orthodoxy'? It still implies the idea of a communion of Churches sharing the same faith, but which have rejected the Council of Chalcedon and recognize only the first three of the Ecumenical Councils. It is unclear what McGuckin means when he writes that the non-Chalcedonian Churches have 'adopted the epithet, applying it in its wider patriotic sense of 'true to the correct opinion' or 'proper in faith'', but he seems to suggest that the other 'Orthodoxy' relies less on the antinomy with the opposing 'heretics', but focuses more on its home-grown Church life and doctrine.

⁷ Dimitri Brady on 'Monophysite', in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, ed. Parry Ken et al, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), p. 325.

⁸ David N. Bell, *Orthodoxy. Evolving Tradition* (Minnesota: Cistercian Publications, 2008), p. 19.

⁹ John Binns, *An introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. viii.

¹⁰ Dimitri Brady on 'Eastern Orthodox', in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, ed. Parry Ken et al, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), p. 170. My italics.

¹¹ McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, pp. 24-25.

Still, however convenient Orthodoxy's relation to the Ecumenical Councils may be, the term 'Orthodox' also appeared before the Councils. Its use was given a fairly wide circulation by Irenaeus in his tract *Contra Haereses (Against Heresies)* (c. 180) to define and discredit his opponents in the early Christian Church. He defined himself as being 'Orthodox' and his position was to be assimilated within the doctrine of the Early Church.¹² As Russian writer Michael Pomazansky points out, 'in early Christian literature there is a constant mention of the keeping of the "rule of faith", the "rule of truth" [...] The very term "Orthodoxy" was widely used even in the epoch before the Ecumenical Councils, then in the terminology of the Fathers of the Church both of the East and of the West.'¹³ Pomazansky also mentions that:

Side by side with the straight, or right, path of faith there have always been those who thought differently (*heterodoxountes*, or 'heterodox', in the explanation of St Ignatius the God-bearer), a world of greater or lesser errors among Christians, and sometimes even whole incorrect systems which attempted to burst into the midst of Orthodox Christians. As a result of the quest for truth there occurred divisions among Christians.¹⁴

By seeing 'Orthodoxy' as preceding the Councils, the term acquires, though remaining 'parallel' to 'heresy', a character somewhat independent from the confusing and politicized debates surrounding the Councils, a character that is somehow perennial and less 'secular', something perhaps essential to the very core of the Christian faith. Pomazansky goes further and separates the 'contentious' character of Orthodoxy, which places it in a constant struggle against heresies, from the undisturbed character, the underlying rule of faith and of truth that had always shaped the life of the Church. Pomazansky uses Biblical arguments to demonstrate the ever-present roots of the concept of 'Orthodoxy': 'The Apostle Paul instructs Timothy to present himself before God a workman that 'needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing (that is, rightly cutting with a chisel, from the Greek *orthotmounta*) the word of truth' (II Tim 2:15).¹⁵

This 'right' discernment presupposed already an external risk here, some kind of 'untruth' that might appear and corrupt the 'word of truth'. This New Testament passage is not singular. At the risk of dislocating his words from their original context, mention could be made of St Paul and his warning signs about future dissensions in the community of the Church: 'Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

¹² See Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I/IRENÆUS/Introductory Note to Irenaeus Against Heresies, accessed on 4 February 2013, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/IRENÆUS/Introductory_Note_to_Irenaeus_Against_Heresies

¹³ Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox dogmatic. A concise exposition* (Platina: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1994), pp. 23-24.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared.’ (1 Timothy 4:1-3). He also says that ‘there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.’ (1 Cor. 11:19). Christ himself made a special point of anticipating trouble ahead: ‘Temptations to sin are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come!’ (Luke 17:1).

As long as there is a risk there is also a need for a correct discernment of the truth of faith. If it is here where the germs of ‘Orthodoxy’ lie, this may mean that wherever a risk is to be anticipated, or a potential ‘heresy’, there is also a need for defining and upholding an Orthodoxy. Hence Orthodoxy appears as an inherent aspect of the Church, an essential component of Christianity. In other words, the truth of faith, by the enormous stake it poses before humankind (its very salvation), presupposes an enormous risk, a risk of this ultimate salvific truth being corrupted, hence an implicit need to protect its ‘Orthodoxy’.

There may also appear, however, a different kind of risk. Speaking of the general significance of the term in the modern secular world, the Orthodox theologian Christos Yannaras writes that it is synonymous with ‘conservatism’ and that ‘every dogmatic ideology has its Orthodoxy.’¹⁶ However he goes on to warn against a certain type of Orthodoxy:

‘Usually the invocation of Orthodoxy happens with a boasting about faithfulness to what is genuine and authentic. ... Thus, Orthodoxy comes to function as a means for justifying not so much conservative ideas as conservative people... Those who will not risk or cannot create something new in life, fasten themselves fanatically to some Orthodoxy. They draw authority, authenticity and, finally, power as representatives and administrators of genuineness – protectors of the forms, interpreters of the letter.’¹⁷

Needless to say, the author sees the Orthodoxy of the Orthodox Church as something very different from the one presented in his powerful description above, as he believes ‘knowledge of the truth is not attained by comprehension of the formulations, but with the sharing in the event of truth, in the truth of life, in the immediacy of experience.’¹⁸ It is however a very useful, clear and sharp reminder of what Orthodoxy may become (and it sometimes does) when divorced from life and experience.

Recent Western scholarship has used the term ‘orthodoxy’ to describe the ‘religious establishment’ that would fend off any progressive ideas from marginalised voices. A tendency has even been felt recently on the part of modern scholars to ‘romanticize’

16 Christos Yannaras, *Elements of faith. An introduction to Orthodox theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), p. 149

17 Ibid., pp. 149-150.

18 Ibid., p. 150.

heresy, to 'sprinkle it with stardust', in the words of Anglican academic Alister McGrath. Orthodoxy is thus seen as the 'stronger' – not necessarily 'truer' – side which prevailed when conflicting theological ideas emerged, and was subsequently accepted into the mainstream thought of the Church, while the opponents were pushed aside, excommunicated or anathematized. Orthodoxy would thus appear to be the 'regnant' side while heresy would appear to be the 'losing' side.¹⁹ The fact that history has shown both these conflicts and their solutions to be sometimes rather arbitrary, as well as being seriously influenced by the political factors of the time, has led to 'Orthodoxy' being equated by some scholars in the West with 'the brute power of the religious establishment',²⁰ while heresy is seen as 'the voice of suppressed and downtrodden cultural groups.'²¹ A process has consequently started to rehabilitate the heretics as rebellious figures unjustly marginalized by the system. Alister McGrath competently proceeds to demythicize this view in his book *Heresy*. However, in all these Western approaches 'Orthodoxy' and 'heresy' are seen as historical and even philosophical realities but with little connection to the 'Orthodoxy' of the Eastern Church, and thus not particularly pertinent to this study. They would also fail to explain the emergence of two or several 'Orthodoxies'. After each of the big schisms there were no 'winners' and 'losers', no reigning majority and marginalised minority, but rather two (or several) big losing sides.

Such was the case after Chalcedon, and such was the case a few centuries later during the long period of separation between the Eastern Church and the Western Church that has led to what is referred to as the Great Schism. The Eastern Church saw itself as the direct continuator of the 'Orthodoxy' of the Early Church and the Ecumenical Councils, which placed it in a direct link with the Church of the Apostolic era, while at the same time continuing to safeguard its unaltered truth of faith.

The Great Schism brought about a third 'orthodoxy', as well as that of the Eastern Chalcedonians and the Oriental non-Chalcedonians – another Western Chalcedonian one. The Eastern and the Oriental clung to their 'Orthodoxy' as a self-defining characteristic, while the West saw itself primarily as the 'universal', '*catholic*' Church. It is interesting how the terms 'catholic' and 'Orthodox', once used to describe the same reality, came now to be separated from one another and to define distinct worlds. The important American Orthodox scholar John Meyendorff (1926-1992) wrote that:

19 Alister McGrath, *Heresy* (London: SPCK, 2009), p. 197.

20 McGrath, *Heresy*, p. 1.

21 Ibid., p. 197.

During the course of the doctrinal disputes following the Peace of Constantinople, the Greek adjectives *katholicos* and *Orthodoxos* were used interchangeably by the followers of the true faith. [...] Catholic was used more frequently with reference to the Church itself, whereas the Church's members were more commonly called the 'Orthodox' - 'those having the right opinions' - in contrast to heretics. Finally during the Middle Ages the custom developed of referring more and more frequently to the 'Orthodox Church' in opposition to Western Roman 'Catholicism'.²²

These were terms assumed with pride by each side. Western Christianity was not as keen on the notion of 'Orthodoxy' and readily gave it up - 'in exchange', as it were - for what it perceived as what was really essential, the 'catholicity', the universal character of the Church. The complex background and intricate problematic that has led to that division of approaches would be too lengthy and ambitious a theme for this study. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware's accurate and succinct description of the separation of the Western and Eastern sides of the Empire is particularly useful here:

From the end of the third century the Empire, while still theoretically one, was usually divided into two parts, an eastern and a western, each under its own Emperor. Constantine furthered this process of separation by founding a second imperial capital in the east, alongside Old Rome in Italy. Then came the barbarian invasions at the start of the fifth century: apart from Italy, much of which remained within the Empire for some time longer, the west was carved up among barbarian chiefs. ... The severance was carried a stage further by the rise of Islam: the Mediterranean, which the Romans once called *mare nostrum*, 'our sea,' now passed largely into Arab control. Cultural and economic contacts between the eastern and western Mediterranean never entirely ceased, but they became far more difficult.²³

A seductively direct, albeit debatable vision of the two different mentalities and tendencies of the two diverging cultures of East and West, expressed long ago by 19th century Anglican Church historian Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, is also particularly revealing at this point: 'The distinction which has been most frequently remarked is that of the speculative tendency of the Oriental, and the practical tendency of the Western Church. [...] It naturally finds its point and expression in the theology of the two Churches. Whilst the Western prides itself on the title of the 'Catholic', the Eastern claims the title of 'Orthodox'²⁴ Stanley also identified an important connection between the Eastern Church and the period of the Councils from a cultural point of view:

[...] we must consider its [The Council of Chalcedon's] peculiar connection with the Eastern Church. This connection it has in common with the first Seven General Councils. The locality of these great assemblies was always Eastern; in most instances immediately in the neighbourhood of the centre of Eastern Christendom, within reach of Constantinople. Their decrees were written, their debates were conducted, not in Latin,

22 John Meyendorff in the Foreword to the 1960 edition of his work *The Orthodox Church. Its past and its role in the world today* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1960), pp. ix-x.

23 Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 52.

24 Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *Lectures on the history of the Eastern Church* (London: J.M. Dent, 1907), p. 71

but in Greek. They are still honoured by the Oriental Church with a reverence which hardly any Western Council has received in the West.'²⁵

Indeed, up to this day, the Orthodox Churches celebrate their 'Orthodoxy' on the feast of the 'Sunday of Orthodoxy', when the allegiance to the seven ecumenical councils is reaffirmed, as are the centuries-old anathemas that sealed the schisms long ago.²⁶ This view not only keeps the Eastern Churches distinct from Latin Christianity but also from the Orthodoxy of the Oriental Churches, in which only three of the seven Councils are recognized. It is evident that Eastern Orthodox Churches have kept, to a degree, to the strongly 'contrasting' view of Orthodoxy, the view of 'us and them', a view that they have maintained throughout the hard centuries that followed, during the Ottoman occupation and, in modern times, during the anti-religious totalitarian communist regimes.

Something very important happened though in the twentieth century when the gap separating the Eastern and Oriental Churches grew smaller and smaller. Finding themselves both in 'non-Orthodox' contexts – in the Diaspora abroad or in ecumenical circles – the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox began to realize that their 'Orthodoxies' were in fact very similar, not according to their historical decrees, but according to their common ethos and allegiance to the life of the early Church. Although they are not yet in Eucharistic communion this does not seem at all an impossible development these days. This task has been seriously delayed by the historical anathemas which now confuse theologians and faithful alike, although steps have been taken to lift them.²⁷ In any case, whatever schism still remains is now perceived more like a technicality and not a serious division. Theologians from both camps view each other as belonging to the same family of Churches and this feeling is growing in the communities of these Churches as well.²⁸

²⁵ Penrhyn, *Lectures*, p. 99.

²⁶ In the festal service it is intoned: 'To those who reject the Councils of the Holy Fathers, and their traditions which are agreeable to divine revelation, and which the Orthodox Catholic Church piously maintains, anathema! anathema! anathema!'

²⁷ In the Eastern Orthodox - Oriental Orthodox Agreement 1993: 'In the light of our Agreed Statement on Christology at Saint Bishoy Monastery 1989, and of our Second Agreed Statement at Chambesy 1990, the representatives of both Church families agree that the lifting of anathemas and condemnations of the past can be consummated on the basis of their common acknowledgement of the fact that the Councils and Fathers previously anathematized or condemned are Orthodox in their teachings.' Accessed on 2 April, 2011, http://www.antiochian.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=652&Itemid=63

²⁸ When visiting a Coptic Church in Cairo, to be granted access into a locked church, I was asked simply whether I was 'Orthodox', and not whether I was a 'Chalcedonian' or 'non-Chalcedonian Orthodox'. The Coptic community regarded the Romanian Orthodox Church as belonging to the same Orthodoxy as theirs.

It would appear then that in practical terms the faithfulness of the Eastern Orthodox Churches to the seven Ecumenical Councils may no longer be regarded as the ultimate criterion of Orthodoxy. By their increasing willingness to accept the Oriental Orthodox in their family they demonstrate perhaps a willingness to return to the Orthodoxy preceding Chalcedon, or even preceding the Councils altogether – a return to a ‘pure’ Apostolic Orthodoxy.

A tendency was noted earlier to try and express Orthodoxy not necessarily as a ‘contentious’ view, inextricably connected to heresy, but as a vision somehow ‘parallel’ to heresy or even preceding heresy. As George Bebis put it, the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed does not describe the Church as being ‘Orthodox’ – Orthodoxy was just then being made. This cannot mean, though, that the doctrine of the Church till then was not correct. The Church had had a doctrine, a praxis and a life and they had been ‘right’. Orthodoxy in other words was not ‘invented’ or ‘introduced’ through the Creeds, but these merely reaffirmed it. A possible definition for both the Eastern and the Oriental Orthodox could be that Orthodoxy is the doctrine and life of the Church as inherited from the Apostles reaffirmed and carefully defined through the early Creeds and Councils.

Indeed as stressed in the Eastern Orthodox - Oriental Orthodox Agreement in 1990, ‘we have now clearly understood that both families have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological faith, and the unbroken continuity of the apostolic tradition, though they may have used Christological terms in different ways. It is this common faith and continuous loyalty to the Apostolic Tradition that should be the basis of our unity and communion.’²⁹ This may well be seen as the essence of Orthodoxy that the Eastern, the Oriental and the Western have all inherited, and a vision of Orthodoxy which, instead of maintaining and emphasizing ‘contrasts’, could be in the future, as it has already been demonstrated at Chambesy in 1990, the ground for sharing and conversation for all Christians.

1.2. The Orthodox – non-Orthodox antinomy

As pointed out earlier, when Orthodox theologians attempt to define their identity and the concepts of ‘Orthodox’ or ‘Orthodoxy’ they seem to approach it from two main viewpoints:

- Orthodoxy seen as a concept antinomic to non-Orthodoxy or heterodoxy.

²⁹ Eastern Orthodox - Oriental Orthodox Agreement 1990, accessed on 21 June 2011, http://www.antiochian.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=653&Itemid=63

- Orthodoxy seen as inheritance of and connection to the past, more precisely the Apostolic age and the early centuries of the Church, particularly the seven Ecumenical Councils.

While presenting such positions, Orthodox scholars seem at the same time overly eager to defend them, due perhaps to the slightly reductionist character implicit in them and sometimes as a response to criticism or questioning from Western theologians. These definitions appear thus often 'defensive' and present some internal tensions.

1.2.1. 'Orthodoxy' versus 'non-Orthodoxy'

'What is the essence of Orthodoxy, quite apart from Roman Catholicism and Protestantism? What should remain of Orthodoxy if there were no antithesis between these Churches [...]'³⁰ Thus ponders Orthodox Greek academic Panagiotis Bratsiotis (1889 – 1982), acknowledging already what most Orthodox perceive Orthodoxy to be – an antithesis between them and the non-Orthodox. He is however at the same time seeking something of more substance that could define Orthodoxy. He immediately identifies 'the fundamental principle of Orthodoxy' as 'the idea that the Orthodox Church adheres to the principles and piety of the early, undivided Church'³¹ – a view this study has already mentioned earlier. It is however already implied in this position that it may not be possible to speak of the Orthodox Church were it not for the antinomy with the non-Orthodox. Thus if hypothetically non-Orthodox groups were to disappear – or indeed become 'Orthodox' – the Orthodox Church itself could no longer be termed 'Orthodox'. Going way back to the words of the influential 19th century Russian theologian, Aleksey Khomiakov:

When false doctrines shall have disappeared, there will be no further need for the name Orthodox, for then there will be no erroneous Christianity. When the Church shall have extended herself, or the fullness of the nations shall have entered into her, then all local appellations will cease; for the Church is not bound up with any locality; she neither boasts herself of any particular see or territory, nor preserves the inheritance of pagan pride; but she calls herself One Holy Catholic and Apostolic.³²

From a point of view thus, the Church is 'Orthodox' simply because there still is an 'erroneous Christianity'. It is a temporary appellation reflecting a state of Christianity which does not have to be permanent. If this be the case however, Orthodox Christians might be facing an identity crisis, if their 'Orthodox' identity is fundamentally 'temporary' or 'secular' in that it is inextricably connected to a certain age of the

³⁰ Panagiotis I. Bratsiotis, 'The fundamental principles and main characteristics of the Orthodox Church', in *The Orthodox ethos*, ed. A. J. Philippou, (Oxford: Holywell Press, 1964), p. 23.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Alexei Stepanovici Khomiakov, *The Church is one* (New York: Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church in America, 1953), pp 47-48.

Church. That is why perhaps some theologians go further in their search for the essence of Orthodoxy and attempt to define Orthodoxy as being more than just a part of a 'polarity'. Greek writer Peter A. Botsis proposes the following view on Orthodoxy:

Orthodoxy, i.e. right belief, is the truth itself. According to the confession of Christ Himself ('I am the way, the truth and the life'), He is the truth incarnate. ... According to the afore-said, Orthodoxy – Truth – is identified with Christ, Who is the Eternal Truth. And due to the fact that God the Trinity is the source of truth, His mode of existence is also truth, the fundamental and eternal Orthodoxy, which men have been called to follow in their own lives.³³

By using this logic Botsis concludes that 'Christ is incarnate Orthodoxy.'³⁴ Orthodoxy interestingly, does not here mean living according to the model of the Trinity, but the very mode of existence of the Trinity is Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is thus much more here than an 'appellation', it is a (pre-) eternal and essential principle of the Church, indeed intimately linked with and even preceding the Incarnation. It has nothing to do with the status of the Church and its earthly schisms but it is an essential characteristic of the Church, it is Truth itself: 'The Church lives through the ages and lives as Orthodoxy. It is impossible to think of the Church without Orthodoxy; and within this framework we can understand the Church as tradition.'³⁵

The words of influential Romanian theologian, Dumitru Staniloae, support this view: 'Orthodoxy is a living condition, the ceaseless life of the Church[...] If the Church had not remained faithful to the truth of her existence, she could not have remained faithful to herself and retained her identity. The contents and the substance of the Church is Orthodoxy.'³⁶ Yet another similar position is proposed by Pomazansky:

'The true path of faith which has always been carefully preserved in the history of the Church, from of old was called *straight, right*, in Greek, *orthos* – that is, 'Orthodoxy.' In the Psalter ... we find such phrases as the following: 'my foot hath stood in uprightness' (Ps. 25:10); 'from before Thy face let my judgment come forth' (Ps. 16:2); 'praise is meet for the upright' (Ps. 32:1); and there are others. [...] The very term 'Orthodoxy' was widely used even in the epoch before the Ecumenical Councils, then in the terminology of the Fathers of the Church both of the East and of the West.'³⁷

Pomazansky suggests that the idea of 'Orthodoxy', as referring to something 'right', 'straight', 'correct', preceded the Ecumenical Councils and implicitly the whole problematic of 'heresy' and 'heterodoxy'. It is a concept essential to the very understanding of faith, from the very beginning of the Church. Pomazansky quotes fragments from the Psalms and from Paul which, though not mentioning Orthodoxy

³³ Peter A. Botsis, *What is Orthodoxy* (Athens: Peter A. Botsis, 1980), p.5.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. pp. 7-8.

³⁶ Dumitru Staniloae quoted in Botsis, *What is Orthodoxy*, p. 8.

³⁷ Pomazansky, *Orthodox dogmatic*, p23-24.

directly, are seen as hinting towards Orthodoxy as a concept, even if some of the chosen fragments fail to make this point as clearly as the author might have hoped.

Pomazansky nevertheless continues by stating that: 'Side by side with the straight, or right, path of faith there have always been those who thought differently (*heterodoxountes*, or "heterodox" [...]). As a result of the quest for truth there occurred divisions among Christians.³⁸ Here 'Orthodoxy' is also presented as running in parallel and in a certain state of antinomy with a number of errors and 'incorrect systems' 'bursting into the midst of Orthodox Christians'.³⁹ By an interesting inversion it is suggested that it was the 'heterodox' that appeared as a reaction to the 'Orthodox', since the quest of truth sometimes results in errors and divisions.

Yet another approach is to refer to the Orthodox Church as simply *the* Church. Its Orthodoxy resides in the very fact that it constitutes the historic continuation of the Church of the Apostolic times. It is thus Orthodox because it is *the* 'original' Church, exactly the same and completely unchanged throughout the centuries. In the words of Archbishop Paul of Finland:

The Orthodox Church simply calls itself 'the Church,' just as the Greeks in the past used the word 'Christians' to refer to the Orthodox. This follows naturally from the fact that the Eastern Orthodox Church is organically the same congregation or *ecclesia* which was born at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem on Pentecost. [...] The Orthodox Church does not need to give proof of its historical authenticity; it is simply the direct continuation of the Church of the Apostolic Age.⁴⁰

This kind of remarkable but certainly not singular view draws an arch straight from the Pentecost, the foundation of Christ's Church all the way up – not to the Church, to the Orthodox Church or to Orthodoxy as a way of life – but to today's congregations of *the Eastern Orthodox Church*. This is not an argument (nor seeking out for one, as the author defensively suggests), but merely a simple fact, justified by an 'organic' uninterrupted continuation along the lines of doctrine, theology and life. This view is not concerned with the notion that communities of West or East may have been left out or lost or estranged during this unambiguous trajectory. It focuses rather on what appears to be the truth at hand and the ultimately relevant reality, namely the location of Christ's salvific *ecclesia* on earth.

Two aspects are evident in all the positions cited so far: firstly there seems to be a defensive attitude on the part of the Orthodox and an avoidance to define themselves merely as defenders of the Apostolic inheritance in the face of erroneous groups, or as

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Paul, Archbishop of Finland, *The faith we hold* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), p 15.

the 'right' side in a polarity dividing the Christian world in two. These positions may be perceived as insufficient by the Orthodox in identifying their identity, as the Orthodox need a vision that would allow them to define and express themselves and their faith on their own accord and without reference to a second (or third) party. Secondly, it is clear already that the Orthodox see their link to the 'principles and piety of the early, undivided Church' as a primary aspect of the essence of their faith. It is these 'right' principles that they have safeguarded in the face of erroneous deviations.

1.2.2. *Orthodoxy as 'exclusive' unity*

Following from all the reflections above, a conclusion which is essential for this study is that the Orthodox Church not only sees as its mission the counteracting of 'erroneous groups', represented nowadays by the other Christian denominations, but it sees these 'groups' as being somehow *outside the Church*. Whilst refusing to see itself as the result of a doctrinal antinomy, that has led eventually to schism, the Orthodox Church goes further and refuses to see the Church as a fragmented reality. Instead it sees itself as the same Church of the Apostolic era and of the early Councils, which the 'erroneous groups' have chosen to leave. In the words of a few major Orthodox theologians:

The Orthodox Church in all humility believes itself to be the 'one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church', of which the Creed speaks: such is the fundamental conviction which guides Orthodox in their relations with other Christians.⁴¹

As a member and priest of the Orthodox Church, I believe that the Church in which I was baptized and brought up is in very truth *the Church*, i.e. *the true Church* and the *only* true Church. I am therefore compelled to regard all other Christian churches as deficient.⁴²

The Orthodox Church is aware that she is the true Church, possessing the plenitude and purity of the truth in the Holy Spirit. Hence proceeds the attitude of the Orthodox Church toward other confessions, separated, immediately or not, from the unity of the Church.⁴³

One notes here that the Orthodox define themselves as *the one, true Church in immediate relation to the other Churches* and this 'guides them in their relation with other Christians'. In fact the implied logic of the term 'Orthodox' – (*orthos* = correct, right and *doxa* = belief/opinion) is that the 'Orthodox' Church is the correct faith distinguished from other churches/groups that have somehow deviated from it. It has labelled itself the 'correct faith' precisely as a consequence of perceiving other communities practising or witnessing an 'incorrect faith'. The idea thus that other Churches are 'imperfect' in relation to the 'plenary' Orthodox Church is embedded in its very

⁴¹ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 316.

⁴² Georges Florovsky, *Ecumenism I. A doctrinal approach* (Vaduz: Buchervertriebsanstalt, 1989), p. 134.

⁴³ Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 187.

nomenclature, and the word 'Orthodox' in itself is somehow intended to have a 'condescending' effect, designed to remind all people – Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike – where the truth of the Church is really to be found. It implies already a certain 'friction' and a differing vision. This is the 'etymological' understanding of what the term 'Orthodox' means.

Orthodoxy, however, has also come to be interpreted or understood quite differently: 'Orthodoxy is the Church of Christ on earth', says Bulgakov. 'The Church of Christ is not an institution; it is a new life with Christ and in Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit.'⁴⁴ In Bulgakov's interpretation, Orthodoxy is seen as the way of life with which the Orthodox Church is equated. Bulgakov also writes that 'Orthodoxy does not desire the submission of any person or group; it wishes to make one understand. This is a field for the operation of the Holy Spirit which lives in the Church, beyond the direct efforts of men.'⁴⁵

As a way of life in Christ guided by the Holy Spirit, Orthodoxy moves away from the central idea of sole ownership of truth and toward a realm that is 'beyond the efforts of men'. In the words of Metropolitan Kallistos, 'By God's grace the Orthodox Church possesses the fullness of truth [...] but there are other Christian communions which possess to a greater or lesser degree a genuine measure of Orthodoxy.'⁴⁶ Bulgakov also believed that the other Churches 'preserve a considerable part of that universal tradition, and, as a result of this, share in Orthodoxy. They all have 'a grain' of Orthodoxy'.⁴⁷

Orthodoxy therefore has come to mean for an increasing number of theologians the way of life in Christ, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the fullness of truth which, by its inherent structure, seeks to make itself known in the world. Equating the Orthodox Church with this type of Orthodoxy brings about a major shift in the Orthodox paradigm regarding the way the Orthodox relate to other denominations, and leads to a radical change in the way they understand 'conversion' to Orthodoxy.

Another aspect to explore here is the relation between the Orthodox Church and Orthodoxy. The Orthodox Church claims to have inherited Orthodoxy as the fullness of truth, the true way of life in Christ, in the guidance of the Holy Spirit – a way of life

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 214.

⁴⁶ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 316.

⁴⁷ Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 188.

in/according to the 'structure' of the Holy Trinity. Orthodox theologians though seem to see this inheritance in different ways.

For some, Orthodoxy represents the fullness of truth and faith to such an extent that Orthodoxy is seen, as it were, sufficient unto itself, untouchable and unchangeable. It cannot be affected by schisms, separations and generally by human actions both inside and outside the Church community. By the very internal logic of this view, a certain implacability is perceived with regard to the idea of belonging to the one Church. As long as you happen to be outside this plenary inheritance of truth, however regrettable though this may be, you remain irrevocably marred by this imperfection. Staniloae presents this rather bluntly thus:

[...]the faithful of the various Christian confessions have found themselves without having willed it within those denominations whose belief is about a Christ who is not present with His whole salvific efficiency in their midst. Their incomplete participation in Christ – largely not their fault – may have as a consequence an incomplete participation in Him also in the life to come, according to the words of the Saviour: 'In my Father's house are many mansions... (John 14,2)'.⁴⁸

He then adds: 'A measure of guilt doubtlessly belongs to the heretics, who, without much deepening of their inherited faith and by allowing themselves to be led more by the sin of pride, have proceeded to tear Christianity apart, which has led to a great evil.'⁴⁹ This is an indirect but very clear re-affirmation of Orthodoxy as the 'right faith', defending itself from the evil of schismatics, who are still responsible, and always will be, for this implacable state of affairs. Such a position could be called the 'self-sufficient' view of Orthodoxy.

Another group of theologians, but also Staniloae himself in other writings, view Orthodoxy as something 'dynamic,' an inheritance that the Orthodox need to cultivate, to grow into and perfect, and – what's more important – to spread and share with the rest of the world. In the words of the great Russian theologian Georges Florovsky: 'The Orthodox Church claims to be *the* Church. There is no pride and no arrogance in this claim. Indeed it implies a heavy responsibility. Nor does it mean "perfection." The Church is still in pilgrimage, in travail, *in via*. She has her historic failures and losses, she has her own unfinished tasks and problems.'⁵⁰ Moreover another great theologian, Sergius Bulgakov, believes that 'relations with heterodox confessions may aid the

48 Dumitru Staniloae, *Teologia dogmatica Ortodoxa. Vol. II* (Bucharest: Institutul Biblic si de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Romane - The Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 2003), pp. 227-278; my translation.

49 Ibid.

50 Florovsky, *Ecumenism I. A doctrinal approach*, p. 139-140.

Orthodox Church to attain greater plenitude and breadth.⁵¹ This view is closely linked to the Orthodox view of Tradition not just as an inheritance that we keep to this day by remaining strictly linked to the past whence it came, but as a continuing work of the Holy Spirit within the Church, by which all Christians are called to Orthodoxy – including the Orthodox. This paradigm again could have an enormous impact on the way the Orthodox relate to the non-Orthodox.

1.2.3. *Orthodoxy as sacramental/Eucharistic communion.*

It is essential not to ignore the central role played by sacramental life in Orthodoxy. It is fair to say that the Orthodox cannot conceive an Orthodoxy that is not centred around the Sacraments of the Church. This is one of the major aspects which, in the view of the Orthodox, keeps the non-Orthodox removed from experiencing the fullness of life in Christ since they ‘exist in a certain connection with [the Church], but do not commune with the light and full power of the sun that is Christ.’⁵²

It has to be stated from the beginning that the role of the Liturgy seen as a centre of sacramental life in the Orthodox tradition is not one of *anamnesis* or catechisation alone, but mostly as a sacramental space centred around the mystery of the Eucharist. The Eucharistic Liturgy plays a central part in the life of the Orthodox community, and the whole life of the faithful is seen as revolving around it. In the words of Bishop Kallistos Ware, ‘Orthodoxy sees human beings above all else as liturgical creatures who are most truly themselves when they glorify God, and who find their perfection and self-fulfilment in worship. Into the Holy Liturgy which expresses their faith, the Orthodox peoples have poured their whole religious experience.’⁵³ Or as expressed by Georges Florovsky: ‘Christianity is a liturgical religion. The Church is first of all a worshipping community. Worship comes first, doctrine and discipline second.’⁵⁴

However, the Eucharistic Liturgy (in its original etymological understanding, *λειτουργία* or *leitourgia* meaning ‘a public work’ or an ‘activity of the people’) is not a self-regarding service, but its purpose is seen as shaping the one Body of Christ in its perpetual movement towards the deification and salvation of Church communities everywhere. In Father Ion Bria’s words: ‘The liturgical assembly is the Father’s House, where the invitation to the banquet of the heavenly bread and wine is constantly voiced and addressed not only to the members of the Church, but also to non-

51 Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 191.

52 Staniloae, *Dogmatica Ortodoxa*, p. 274.

53 Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 272.

54 Cited in Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 271.

Christians and strangers.’⁵⁵ It represents a fundamental calling ultimately aiming to draw together the human race, the entire creation and the whole universe.

The very important Russian-diaspora theologian Alexander Schmemmann pointed out the characteristic of Liturgy as a Passover, a journey into a different reality:

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is best understood as a journey or procession. It is the journey of the Church into the dimension of the kingdom [...] our entrance into the presence of Christ is an entrance into a fourth dimension which allows us to see the ultimate reality of life. It is not an escape from this world, rather it is the arrival at a vantage point from which we can see more deeply into the reality of the world.’⁵⁶

In the community of the Eucharist the Orthodox ‘subsist in a manner different from the biological, as members of a body which transcends every exclusiveness of a biological or social kind.’⁵⁷ Here the human being acquires an ‘ecclesial identity’ in which we ‘appear to exist not as that which we are but as that which we will be,’⁵⁸ that is we acquire an eschatological way of being. This eschatological vision is theologically connected to the concept of *theosis*, which this study will tackle soon, albeit briefly.

The Eucharist, and the sacraments of the Church in general, enable for Staniloae, and for Orthodox theologians in general, an ‘intimate’ connection with Christ, without which the fullness of the life in Christ is lost, and he sees sacraments as a an essential element of the unity of the Church:

[...]in organising her activities in the varied contexts of life of various nations or groups of faithful determined by their traditions, the one Church can take the appearance of several autocephalous churches, each with its own statutes and regulations and manners of action. But in dogmas, in *Sacraments*, in the hierarchy that confesses the dogmas and fulfils the Sacraments, the Church is one. Only a Church that is one - in dogmas, in *Sacraments*, in her hierarchical organisation and communion - is a Church truly unitary, and only the Church which keeps these three without alteration is a Church truly one.’⁵⁹

Staniloae does not fail to remind us of this aspect also with regard to ecumenical relations, and he reflects that, in its aspiration to rebuild the unity of Christ’s Church, the ecumenical movement ‘needs to aspire towards the most intimate presence of the whole Christ in the midst of the faithful. But the degree of the most intimate and active presence of Christ in her midst is confessed and experienced by the Orthodox Church

55 Cited in Vladimir Fedorov, ‘Perspectives of ecumenical cooperation in Theological Education in Eastern and Central Europe’ on the WCC website; accessed on 22 May 2012 at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ete/wocati/perspectives-of-ecumenical-cooperation-in-theological-education-in-eastern-and-central-europe-dr-vladimir-fedorov>

56 Alexander Schmemmann, *The world as sacrament* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), pp. 29-30.

57 John D. Zizioulas, *Being as communion. Studies in the personhood of the Church* (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), p. 60.

58 Ibid., p. 59.

59 Staniloae, *Dogmatica Ortodoxa. Vol. II*, p. 274.

which has kept the tradition of life of the primary Church.’⁶⁰ This sacramental, ‘intimate’ life in Christ is seen as ‘validating’ and ‘fuelling’ the doctrine of the Orthodox, their life and pastoral (social) involvement.

A very brief note should be made at this point on the theological concept and theological vision of *theosis*, or deification, which informs the centrality of the Eucharist and the Sacraments in the life of the Orthodox Church. However incongruous it may be for a theological theme as vast and complex as *theosis* (behind which lie centuries of patristic and theological thought) to be approached only in passing, it is essential to have at least a general understanding of it, since it is of particular relevance to this study.

In the vision of St Athanasius of Alexandria, who is famously associated with the concept of *theosis*: ‘*The Son of God became man, so that we might become God.*’⁶¹ To partake of God’s nature is seen as the very reason or ‘plan’ of God’s creation: ‘God has created us in order that we may become partakers of the divine nature, in order that we may enter into eternity, and that we may appear like unto Him, being deified by that grace out of which all things that exist have come.’⁶² Indeed the same vision was shared by St Basil the Great: ‘Man is nothing less than a creature that has received the order to become God.’⁶³

According to Orthodox Theology, a ‘link’ must be maintained with God through which humankind can constantly receive the never-ending love of God, which nourishes and increases one’s love for others. It is precisely through the sacramental/Eucharistic life of the Church that this connection with God appears materialised in Orthodox spirituality. Through the sacraments and particularly through the Eucharist, through the communal services of the Church, through the spiritual life and prayer of each individual member of the Church, a connection with the Triune God is always maintained and nurtured.

Deification therefore is not seen in the Orthodox tradition as achievable outside the Eucharistic life of the Church, and it can only be achieved through an event of communion not only between each individual and God, but between the whole community of the Church and the community of the Trinity. Indeed this deifying

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 276.

⁶¹ St. Athanasius, *De incarnatione*, 54, 3: PG 25, 192B. Cited in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Second edition, accessed on 11 May 2011, <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p122a3p1.htm>.

⁶² St Maximus the Confessor. Epist. 43, ‘Ad Joannem cubicularium,’ cited in Vladimir Lossky, *The mystical theology of the Eastern Church* (London: James Clarke, 1957), p. 90.

⁶³ Quoted by Kallistos Ware in the Foreword to Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *The deification of man. St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox tradition* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), p. 7.

communion between humankind as God is seen in Orthodox theology as the very definition of the Church:

[...] through communion in the sacraments of Christ man partakes of His uncreated grace⁶⁴ and is united with him into one body and one spirit. This immediate and personal link between every believer and Christ calls for a genuine unification and communion between believers themselves. In this way a new relationship, beyond words and beyond nature, is set up between man and Christ. *This is the Church.*⁶⁵

1.3. *The Orthodox Church as inheritor and continuator of tradition*

1.3.1. *The tension between tradition and Tradition*

‘The first fundamental and essential characteristic of the Orthodox Church’ writes Bratsiotis, ‘is its steady adherence to the Holy Tradition which it inherits from the early Catholic Church.’ He immediately adds that ‘[...] in the Orthodox Church tradition is not regarded as a static factor – as many non-Orthodox people think – but as a dynamic one. Loyalty to tradition does not simply mean slavish attachment to the past and to external authority, but a living connection with the entire past experience of the Church. [...] Adherence to tradition has been a fundamental principle and an essential characteristic of the Church of Christ ever since it was founded’.⁶⁶

Obvious here already is the oft-encountered tension between the inheritance of the tradition of the past, and the current ongoing experiencing in the life of the Orthodox community of this inheritance. Tradition is a ‘fundamental principle and an essential characteristic of the Church inherited, Bratsiotis believes, from Judaism.’⁶⁷ It is however to be seen as a ‘dynamic’ reality. This slightly protective clarification is presented by the author as a response to what ‘many non-Orthodox people think.’ It is a reaction most probably to those accusations from Western scholars and occasioned mainly by ecumenical encounters throughout the last century that Orthodoxy is overly anchored in the past which may preclude it from being sufficiently immersed in the reality of the

⁶⁴ And also of His ‘uncreated energy’ or ‘uncreated light’: an essential concept in Patristic literature, used to distinguish from God’s essence, especially as regards man’s union with God. Thus union with God takes place in His energies or in his grace, ‘making us participate in the divine nature, without our essence becoming thereby the essence of God.’ In Vladimir Lossky, *The mystical theology of the Eastern Church* (London: James Clarke, 1991), p. 87. Thus the divine essence and the human essence remain distinct even when full union with God is achieved.

⁶⁵ Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *The deification of man. St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox tradition* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), p. 57.

⁶⁶ Bratsiotis, ‘The Fundamental Principles’, p. 24.

⁶⁷ The Western scholar R.M French brings another view on tradition, linked with the past of most Orthodox nations: ‘It is small matter for wonder if the Orthodox are in some way rigid, if they are conservative and inspired by the conviction that the Faith is above all something to be guarded, if their attitude is defensive with perhaps at times a nuance of what some would call an inferiority complex. History has sentenced them to cherish their faith in the face of opposition, not even Russia has been immune in modern times.’ In R.M. French, *The Eastern Orthodox Church*, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1964), p. 18.

contemporary world. It is perhaps due to this external pressure that Orthodox theologians needed to reaffirm tradition as the capitalized Tradition (a relatively modern addition in Orthodox theology), a living reality, which, although connecting them with the past, is essentially and eternally 'contemporary', since it concerns the ongoing life of the Church as informed by the Holy Spirit. The connection between the past and the contemporary is very revealingly described by Staniloae thus:

The Orthodox Church, a poorly-known witness of faith and of the spiritual practice of faith as it springs from the Holy Scripture, of the way it was practiced by the Apostles and witnessed by the Church of the first centuries, has still the freshness of those times. It is also very contemporary: for in our age, when there is a need for so much renewal, it is genuine things that we need.⁶⁸

Or in the words of Patriarch Daniel of Romania: '[...] the Church is inevitably Tradition, that is to say a dynamic process of continuity and renewal in the Holy Spirit, who bears witness to the crucified and risen Christ, throughout the ages, involving the human and historical dimension as partner in communion with the eternal Trinity.'⁶⁹ And yet again, the same view is expressed by John Meyendorff: 'When Orthodoxy speaks of a "return to the sources," it does not mean a return to the dead past, but only continuity and consistency with the apostolic faith. Consistency does not imply repetition, but living understanding – or *gnosis* – of the faith "once delivered to the saints," which must be rediscovered, reformulated and witnessed anew in the midst of historical change.'⁷⁰

1.3.2. Orthodoxy as a 'breathing' tradition

Following the above positions it becomes apparent that modern Orthodox theologians have stressed the importance of Orthodoxy as a living, breathing, dynamic reality, anchored to an equal extent in the past but also in the present. 'Orthodoxy in the modern world is indeed an "old tree" writes Metropolitan Kallistos Ware. But besides age there is also vitality, a "perpetual resurrection"; and it is this that matters, and not mere antiquity. Christ did not say, "I am custom"; he said, "I am the Life".'⁷¹ While this is not a novel understanding of Orthodoxy, it is however a novel emphasis, the appearance of which, arguably, may have been occasioned by the participation of the Orthodox in ecumenical contexts, where their overpowering allegiance to the past was

⁶⁸ Marc-Antoine Costa de Beauregard, Dumitru Staniloae, *Mica dogmatica vorbita. Dialoguri la Cernica (Short spoken dogmatics. Dialogues at Cernica)* (Sibiu: Deisis, 2000), p 41, my translation.

⁶⁹ Daniel Ciobotea (Metropolitan), *Confessing the truth in love. Orthodox perceptions of life, mission and unity* (Iasi: Trinitas, 2001), p. 157.

⁷⁰ John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church. Its past and its role in the world today* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), p. vii.

⁷¹ Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox way* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), p. 9. The phrase "old tree" is quoted by Metropolitan Kallistos from John Betjeman.

often questioned by their Western counterparts, especially in the first decades of the ecumenical movement. This new emphasis may hint to a paradigm shift in recent Orthodox theology: from 'defending' or 'safeguarding' tradition, the Orthodox have moved to 'living' and 'experiencing' Tradition. This living of Tradition implies not resting or relying on the past and its inheritance, but on the contrary it implies action, discovery and renewal.

One of the clearest expressions of this model for Orthodoxy is expressed by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware:

One of the most ancient names for Christianity is simply "the Way". (Acts 19:23; 24:22) 'It is a name that emphasizes the practical character of the Christian faith. Christianity is more than a theory about the universe, more than teachings written down on paper; it is a path along which we journey – in the deepest and richest sense, the *way of life*. [...] As a Christian of the Orthodox Church, I wish particularly to underline this need for *living experience*.⁷²

And, again, responding to possible reactions from the West, Metropolitan Kallistos adds:

To many in the twentieth-century West, the Orthodox Church seems chiefly remarkable for its air of antiquity and conservatism; the message of the Orthodox to their Western brethren seems to be, "We are your past". For the Orthodox themselves, however, loyalty to Tradition means not primarily the acceptance of formulae or customs from past generations, but rather the ever-new, personal and direct experience of the Holy Spirit *in the present*, here and now.⁷³

Turning, at this stage, to the concept of *theosis*, it is important to mention that it too is interpreted as a process, a journey. *Theosis* is 'the process of sanctification of Christians whereby they become progressively conformed to God, a conformation that is ultimately demonstrated in the glorious transfiguration of the just in the heavenly Kingdom.'⁷⁴ Deification, leading to or being practically concurrent with salvation, can be achieved *fully* only in the *eschata*. Yet reaching this union with God during earthly life is nevertheless possible to a limited degree, and the example of the saints, most of whom are perceived as people who have achieved that state of holiness, is essential in Orthodox spirituality. However, since it can never be *fully* achieved before the *eschata*, the calling to deification during earthly life is never-ceasing. In other words *theosis* is not perceived as an appropriated 'state' that can be achieved and maintained, but rather like a continuous struggle towards perfection, towards the union with God. This

⁷² Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, pp 7-8.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 8.

⁷⁴ John Anthony McGuckin, 'Deification in Greek Patristic Thought: The Cappadocian Fathers' Strategic Adaptation of a Tradition', in M Christensen & J Wittung (ed), *Partakers of the Divine nature. The history and development of deification in the Christian tradition* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), p. 95.

struggle and constant aspiration toward perfection, representing in fact the spiritual life of the faithful, retains a perpetually dynamic character.

Thus, deification appears to be a *process* of perfection for the human being, starting from the *image* of God and aspiring to reach the *likeness* of God – likeness that is itself a perpetual progress since it can only reach a form of completion in the Kingdom of heaven. *Theosis* is seen as the goal of life, as a *constant aspiration* toward a stage when ‘God becomes our life,’ a stage which starts in effect the very second one aspires toward it. Deification remains a reality and not some remote projection or chimera and, as it is identified with the very struggle and aspiration of the faithful, it is something that can be experienced *now* on earth. Yet as a reality which is in constant transformation and which is expected to always ascend upwards to an ever-higher stage, it is almost impossible to describe or define.

The journey of deification is not a lonely journey, but it is a journey which engages the whole community of the Church, a vision which links *theosis* with the Trinitarian understanding of theology. Thus the search for deification cannot be self-orientated, as salvation of the others is as important as one’s own salvation. Indeed the Church as the community of the faithful can be seen as a ‘a communion of deification.’⁷⁵ Moreover, from this Trinitarian perspective ‘mankind is one being but multi-hypostatic, just as God is One Being in Three Persons.’⁷⁶

Thus Orthodoxy is not seen only as a way of life but as an exploration, a journey; the image of a journey is particularly appropriate, as it conveys both the idea of dynamism and that of (self-) discovery. It is however the concept of ‘renewal’ (ever-new experience) that bears a huge significance and is particularly relevant to this study. Renewal opposes the idea of an ultimate inherited Truth, the definitive nature of which makes any further analysis redundant or indeed harmful.⁷⁷ Renewal implies that what we have inherited constitute ‘signposts on the way’⁷⁸ but not the way itself. Orthodox life as renewal opposes the idea of Orthodoxy as a ‘given’, a gift received from our forefathers, but presents Orthodoxy as a journey towards the salvific Truth of Christ, or indeed as a destination that one aspires towards. It presents Orthodoxy as something that needs to be discovered and then constantly re-discovered, not just by the non-Orthodox, but by the Orthodox themselves:

⁷⁵ Mantzaridis, *The deification of man*, p. 57.

⁷⁶ Archimandrite Sophrony, *His life is mine* (London and Oxford: Mowbrays, 1977), p. 88.

⁷⁷ Illustrative in this case is a very popular Romanian religious proverb: ‘One should believe and not examine’.

⁷⁸ The phrase belongs to Metropolitan Kallistos. See *The Orthodox Way*, p. 7-27.

Orthodoxy proposes to all Christians a treasure belonging to all and which can serve as a basis for the renewal of all even in the midst of the communities they may belong to. Even the members of the Orthodox Church need to rediscover Orthodoxy [...] Now all we need to do is to renew this way of practising and living the faith, our connection with Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit, our spirituality. [...] We practise the faith in the Holy Trinity by living according to the model of love of the Father and of the Son, being filled with the Father's love for the Son, while – in unity with Christ – loving the Father; having above us the same Spirit and remaining united with the Son and with each other like the first Christians. [...] By keeping this tradition the Church responds today to the needs of the world, making everything it has kept to shine anew.⁷⁹

The implications in the above passage from Staniloae for a modern understanding of Orthodoxy but also for a vision of Orthodoxy vis-à-vis ecumenism are countless and of enormous significance. Staniloae too speaks here of the 'freshness' of the Orthodox inheritance, which has an implicitly 'contemporary' character. This inheritance does not represent a doctrine, but a 'framework of spiritual life' within which the faithful need to renew their experience and living of the faith.⁸⁰ Far from being a given set of written rules and doctrines, Orthodoxy, in Staniloae's view, is a calling to renewal, it is a way of life responding to the needs of the world, in which the principles of its inheritance 'shine anew'. Furthermore, this inheritance does not belong only to the Orthodox but to the whole humanity, constituting a potential basis for renewal for the communities outside the Orthodox Tradition. This view of an out-reaching all-renewing Orthodoxy appears here less missionary and more vocational – intimately linked, that is, with the very essence and vocation of Orthodoxy. In the passage below Staniloae emphasizes the Orthodox renewal as a calling for all Christians and even for all humans:

By hearing and receiving the Gospel humans become capable of responding themselves to the others and to the cosmos. But this 'responsibility' is not acquired automatically. An effort has to be invested so that humans may become worthy inheritors of the witness of the Apostolic age. [...] This renewal of the Spirit of the Apostles is the fundamental task for Christians and for all the people of our age: I think Christians should unite in what Orthodoxy has kept, reiterating, reflecting the life of the early Church, of the Church of the Apostles.⁸¹

Very important here is the view that Orthodoxy implies a constant effort and a responsibility, and is not acquired 'automatically', again emphasizing the fact that it cannot be an inherited given. Staniloae expresses his view that Christians should unite in the *modus vivendi* that Orthodoxy has kept but, since the renewed discovery of Orthodoxy is also a constant calling for the Orthodox themselves, they too are called to this unity. They do not invite the others to Orthodoxy as a model of the undivided

⁷⁹ de Beauregard and Staniloae, *Mica dogmatica vorbita*, p 41, my translation.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp 41-42.

Church, but they too are invited to this reunion. From this point of view, the Orthodox inheritance could thus constitute the very meeting point of the various traditions back into a Church that would observe accurately the principles and way of life of the early Church founded by the Apostles. Thus the calling to Orthodoxy, addressed both to non-Orthodox and Orthodox alike, could in fact be seen as ultimately a calling to unity. The view of a 'vocational' out-reaching all-renewing Orthodoxy, as identified in the previous paragraph, resonates perhaps with some positions from Orthodox scholarship identifying ecumenism, as reunion of all Christians, as a vocation for Orthodoxy, which is seen to be 'ecumenical in its very identity'.⁸² In the words of Romanian Patriarch Daniel:

The responsibility for schisms and separations throughout history is different, but the duty to achieve the visible unity of Christians is the same for all, because love is a matter of identity for Christians: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35). A divided Christianity is, first of all, an indictment of the Christians themselves, not only of the ones who directly caused the separations, but also for all those who are indifferent to the issue of unity or of communion with other fellow human beings.⁸³

Reflecting on all of the above, if Orthodoxy be seen as a journey it should not have to be a lonely journey. And, since 'Orthodoxy proposes to all Christians a treasure belonging to all for the renewal of all', the Orthodox journey seems, in fact, to be less 'complete' in isolation. The theology of a dynamic, 'breathing', renewing Orthodoxy opens up new avenues for a deeper and clearer understanding of Orthodox identity and of the way in which the Orthodox can relate to today's world.

1.4. The Journey after the Schism

While Orthodoxy as a concept was gradually shaped and defined in the period of the early Ecumenical Councils, and later on, during and following the Great Schism with the Western (Catholic) Church, its self-understanding and geographical sphere of operation became increasingly specific in the post-imperial post-Schism era and up to the modern day. An exposition or an analysis of the post-imperial multi-pronged and hardly homogenous history of the Orthodox Churches would be far beyond the remit of this study. A brief consideration of this vast period is nevertheless necessary, as the identity of the Orthodox and the way they relate to the rest of the Christian world has also been fundamentally shaped by their more recent history.

⁸² Ioan Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries. The ecumenical vocation of Orthodoxy', in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 56 No. 2, April 2004, p. 224.

⁸³ Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth*, pp 59-60.

This study will not follow the multifarious history of Orthodox communities in the past six centuries, but will focus on a number of unifying themes which have characterised this journey and which are of specific relevance to the research at hand. The themes this study will focus on are: the almost continuous necessity for the Orthodox Churches to struggle for their survival under very difficult times; the pervasive tendency toward internal dissensions within Orthodox communities; and the seemingly unavoidable propensity towards nationalistic tendencies. This study will tackle very briefly each of these aspects with a view to determine how they have informed the way the Orthodox relate today to ecumenical contexts.

1.4.1. The constant fight for survival

Compromise was sadly what characterised the immediate post-Schism attempts towards the restoration of Church unity which took place first at Lyons in 1274, and then at Ferrara-Florence (1438-9) – both of which proved to be unsuccessful. These Councils were occasioned more than anything by the increasing need of the Byzantine Emperors to secure political and military aid against the advancing Ottoman threat.⁸⁴ First, at Lyons, the Orthodox delegates agreed half-heartedly to recognize papal primacy and to recite the Creed with the addition of the *Filioque*. A somewhat similar context was later that of Florence, although the talks were of a much more extensive nature. However substantial the discussions, they aimed to sort out in too short a time what had become by then fundamental doctrinal differences. While the Roman Church clung determinedly to its views, the Orthodox were eventually faced with the ‘unpalatable alternative of either yielding to the Roman view or breaking off the talks and attempting to cope with the Turkish threat alone.’⁸⁵ The Orthodox finally signed the Act of Union (with the one exception of the Archbishop of Ephesus), but, like before in the case of the Council of Lyons, the terms of the union were never in fact accepted by Orthodox communities back home, and were repudiated immediately and unanimously in the Byzantine world.

Instead of constituting steps towards unity, the Councils of Lyons and Florence served as bitter reminders of the increasingly insurmountable nature of the division and of the lingering acrimony between the two sides. Moreover these Councils have penetrated deeply into the consciousness of Orthodox communities, and are still used today by many of the anti-ecumenical writers as examples, as it were, of the essentially failed nature of ecumenism. Orthodox ecumenical engagements of today are often seen to be,

⁸⁴ See McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, pp. 20-23.

⁸⁵ Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 58.

as in the case of Lyons and Florence, motivated by political agendas, and are expected to lead, just like before, to treacherous agreements towards unity against the general will of Orthodox communities.

A broad-brush cursory description of the period following the Great Schism would tell the story of the Orthodox Churches in Europe as a long and troubled era of subjection and suffering under hostile powers. As the Schism became in a sense 'cemented' after the infamous Fourth Crusade and the sacking of Constantinople, there has been from those times and up to this day a perception among the Orthodox that 'the hostility of the Western Church, and its designs against Orthodoxy, were part of the reason why the Orthodox Church fell so heavily before the might of the Ottoman armies in 1453.'⁸⁶ This feeling of lingering suspicion has again had a direct influence on the ecumenical participation of the Orthodox Churches and on their dialogue with the Western Churches up to this day.

The history of the autocephalous Churches of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Georgia, Albania was marked for centuries by the occupation of the Ottoman Empire. As Christians were allowed under the Ottoman rule to administer themselves, the Patriarch of Constantinople received an 'official' role from the Ottoman rule as 'responsible' for all Christians to the sultan. Greek Church hierarchy found itself, in the words of Meyendorff, 'invested with considerable power, [...] in some respects greater than the authority it had enjoyed before the Turkish conquest. The jurisdiction of the ecumenical patriarch was virtually limitless, for it embraced not only the faithful who belonged to his own patriarchate but also those in other Eastern Patriarchates [...] and even heterodox Christians who happened to be living in the Ottoman Empire.'⁸⁷

Although the Russian Church was spared the plight of Ottoman occupation, its own internal tensions ensured an equally troubled period. In effect, as this study will show later on, Patriarch Nikon's 'tendency to remake and shift everything in the Greek way', as well as Peter the Great's Synodal Period informed by his passion 'to remake everything in the German or Dutch way'⁸⁸ felt almost like a foreign occupation or oppression.

The atheistic communist regimes under Soviet control which were to affect all Orthodox European Churches (with the exception of Greece) was the next period of

⁸⁶ John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: an introduction to its history, doctrine, and spiritual culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p.22.

⁸⁷ John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 87.

⁸⁸ Cited in Alexander Schmemmann, *The historical road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1966), p. 329.

severe and targeted oppression against the Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox Church went almost straight from the strange internal persecution of Peter the Great's Synodal Period to the strong repression of the Bolsheviks. Traditional Orthodoxy continued as an underground force while the atheistic communist regime proceeded systematically and meticulously to bring about the destruction of all Church establishments and religious feeling in the midst of all communities. The Church resisted initially and denounced the new anti-religious power but was soon reduced to silence following many violent persecutions and executions. Out of necessity however the communist state resumed a manipulative relation with the Church during the Second World War in order to gain the trust and support of the population.

In the case of the autocephalous Churches of Europe, after they had managed to gain their independence from foreign occupations, they embarked upon a difficult and strenuous journey to rediscover their identity, to define their Orthodoxy in relation to their national and cultural inheritance and values. Their efforts were foiled however by the two World Wars which followed in quick succession, further enhancing these nations' poverty and precarious political stability. As in the case of the Russian Church, these Churches were to go through long decades of communist dictatorship, when the atheistic powers sought – with greater or lesser alacrity – to eradicate all religious life. Although the various communist states related differently to the Churches in their context – from total intolerance, as in the case of Russia, to a degree of controlled 'co-operation', as in the case of Romania – communist power remained purely materialistic in its dialectics, and religion had certainly no place in the longer-term visions of society. Thus, despite varying degrees of co-operation with the communist State, Churches were on a course towards gradual eradication – until this process was halted after the almost general collapse of communist rule at the beginning of the 90s.

Farther to the East the historical patriarchates of the Eastern Orthodox Church had gone through equally difficult times. The historical Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem share with their European sisters the history of oppression under the Ottoman yoke, though they have been arguably forced to subsist in the more recent history under even harsher conditions than the Churches under communism. In predominantly Muslim contexts – with the exception of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem – they have found themselves, in one way or another, to quote McGuckin, 'in a state of slow suffocation.'⁸⁹ These Patriarchates are still

⁸⁹ McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 40.

functioning today, bringing, despite sometimes dwindling numbers, an important input in the ecumenical dialogue with the Western Churches and also, often, a rather different ethos from that of their European counterparts.

Most of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, both in Europe and the East, still struggle today under less than ideal situations. In Eastern Europe the post-communist 'transition' period has been one of continual internal turmoil, and the communities have often responded violently to the increased wave of cultural influence from the West and to the mounting phenomenon of globalisation by returning once again to the old rhetoric of nationalism. This has sometimes led paradoxically to a tendency towards isolationism not only with regard to the ecumenical dialogue with the Churches of the West, but also with the other Orthodox Churches. However the exchange, both pan-Orthodox and ecumenical, does continue steadily, and these Churches do enjoy nowadays full freedom and an almost unprecedented opportunity once again to develop and flourish. And even if the situation of the Orthodox Churches in the Middle East seems to worsen day by day, particularly after the start of the civil war in Syria in 2011 (still ongoing at the time of writing) which has brought an immense threat to the survival of Christian communities in the region, the diasporas, particularly the Antiochian one, continues unabated and increased its work in the service of Church communities.

Thus, to sum up in very general terms, the Orthodox Churches have gone from the Ottoman persecution to merciless wars and then to fierce internal communist intolerance in the case of the Eastern European Churches, or to a context of increasing Islamic intolerance, in the case of the Middle-Eastern Churches. There hardly ever seemed to be any period for any of these Churches to settle and establish an identity.

This constant struggle in the face of adversity has amplified the Orthodox defensive view that the doctrine of the Church has had to be safeguarded – alongside national identity. The adverse factors were now not necessarily heresies or departures from the doctrine of the Church, but a more concrete form of oppression which threatened the eventual obliteration of the Orthodox Churches. However these destructive factors were not perceived to be in a different category from the erstwhile Church schismatics, but rather as a continuation and direct consequence of the schism. The fact that the Eastern Churches were left militarily exposed to the Ottoman threat was perceived as a direct consequence of the East-West divide, and it was somehow due to the schismatics' betrayal that Eastern Churches now faced extinction. This is an important

aspect to consider as the safeguarding of Orthodoxy has always to a degree remained closely linked with schismatic disloyalty. The West has arguably remained a dubious force and a perennial foe in the conscience of the Balkans and Eastern Europe, and even communism was eventually perceived as a Western innovation as its ideological roots harked back to the philosophy of Marx and Engels.

The long period of sufferings has fostered distrust and an obsession for the Orthodox to avoid making any concession that could possibly endanger what had been painstakingly defended. It has also maintained the Orthodox Church in an 'automatic' mode of self-preservation in the face of hostile forces which desire its obliteration. The ecumenical movement is sometimes perceived to be one such force due to its Western origin and generally as it is an 'external' reality, the motivation of which remains foggy and suspicious.

1.4.2. Internal disagreements

Orthodox Churches have been constantly weakened by internal tensions in the difficult contexts of the post-imperial era, and the history of the Russian Church was the first to exemplify this reality very clearly. When the Byzantine Empire fell in 1453 with the taking of Constantinople, it was the Russian Church that took over the inheritance of Byzantine Orthodoxy, with Moscow assuming the title of the 'Third Rome'. As put by Kallistos Ware: 'To the Russians it seemed no coincidence that at the very moment when the Byzantine Empire came to an end, they themselves were at last throwing off the few remaining vestiges of Tartar suzerainty: God it seemed was granting them freedom because He had chosen them to be the successors of Byzantium.'⁹⁰

Russian Orthodoxy was to be however stretched for centuries between opposing poles. On the one hand the polarity was between the way the Church situated itself vis-à-vis the state: as dependent on it or preserving its independence from it. On the other hand, there was the polarity between various violent attempts towards change and innovation and a tendency towards clinging to traditional Orthodox and Russian values. These polarities often ran curiously in parallel and informed one another.

The first period of particular interest is the period of the schism of the Old Believers. This was caused by the vigorous and seemingly rather unnecessary reforms of Patriarch Nikon, a great admirer of Greek Orthodoxy whose great desire was to adapt Russian service books, structure and every single ritualistic detail in accordance to the Greek model. He faced massive popular opposition when this brutally interfered with

⁹⁰ Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 112.

everyday gestures of Christian life – the sign of the cross is the most significant example, as people were forced to perform the gesture with three fingers as opposed to two. However Nikon's conviction was such that he did not hesitate to use persecution; his opponents were exiled, imprisoned and sometimes even executed. This led to the creation of a separate faction in the Church, the Old Believers, which exists up to this day, and who have themselves displayed excesses, as was to be expected – nationalism, Russophilism –, in opposition to the excessive ideology in the name of which they were persecuted.

Patriarch Nikon also desired the authority of the Patriarch to be equal to that of the Tsar and these aspirations toward authority did not remain without consequence. It may be said that the period that was to follow – the reign of Peter the Great (reigned 1682-1725) – came in a way as a reaction to the Church's previous claims to imperial authority. In 1721 Peter abolished the Patriarchate altogether and established in its place a Spiritual College or Holy Synod, made up of Bishops, monks and married clergy which he himself appointed or withdrew, as he saw fit. The constitution of this synod was copied from constitutions of Protestant councils in Germany. This marked the beginning of an increasing infusion of western culture into Russian society, infusion of which theology was not at all spared. Up until the end of the 'Synodal Period' theology was taught in Latin in seminaries and under heavy influence of Protestant and Catholic sources – a context described by Metropolitan Kallistos as 'an age of ill-advised Westernization in Church art, Church music and theology.'⁹¹

What is interesting to note is the strange similarity between the tendencies of both Patriarch Nikon and Peter the Great. In the words of George Florovsky, Nikon had 'an almost morbid tendency to remake and shift everything in the Greek way, as Peter later on had a passion to remake everything in the German or Dutch way. They also shared a strange readiness to break with the past, this unexpected lack of an established pattern of life, this premeditation and artificiality.'⁹² From a modern-day perspective, this kind of oppression may explain to a degree the reticence that the Russian Church has had towards the Western-based ecumenical movement. It has threatened more than once to quit the World Council of Churches which would have created a significant ripple effect in the demographics of the Council, as many other Orthodox Churches still under the influence of Moscow would have followed suit. On

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 128.

⁹² Cited in Alexander Schmemmann, *The historical road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1966), p. 329.

the other hand, the slightly belligerent and straight language employed in ecumenical negotiations is perhaps an inheritance of the ethos of the 'imperial'/State Church. The association between State and Church has in fact been extended up to this day, when the public often decries too close a relationship between State structures and Church hierarchy, each showing an unhealthy mutual unconditional support of the other.

The dissension in the Orthodox world continued in the post-World-War years in the shadow of communist dictatorship. The interesting ethical question facing both the Russian and East-European Churches was now whether the Church was supposed to collaborate with the manifestly anti-religious State structures – and thus ensuring a degree of survival and a better treatment from the hostile regime – or whether they were supposed to rebel and denounce the rulers without compromising in the least their Christian message and identity – but risking to eventually become even more vilified and eventually obliterated. It would seem that the former alternative made more sense given the circumstances, though this could still not entirely justify the excessively sycophantic and subservient discourse of many of the Orthodox hierarchs. This tension between subservience and revolt marred the internal dynamics of the Orthodox Churches under communism and even led to major schisms – as in the case of the Russian Orthodox Church, where parts of its diaspora distanced themselves from the communist-friendly Church structures in Moscow and eventually transferred their allegiance to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

One can speculate that this cultivated ability of Orthodox hierarchies to compromise with State structures and employ, as it were, a duplicitous 'political' attitude has influenced to a degree their stance within the World Council of Churches during the Cold War when they could easily navigate between ecumenical jargon and their own conviction that theirs was the only 'real' Church.

Interestingly, dissension after the communist period centred often on the ecumenical movement itself. So perilous a reality the ecumenical context was perceived to be, and so grave a compromise this unclear alliance with Western structures seemed, that many of the more conservative factions in the Orthodox world rose against any such co-operation and did not shy away from denouncing their own hierarchs whenever these were felt to be excessively ecumenical. In the case of Romania for instance, Patriarch Daniel's ecumenical past and his temperate support of ecumenical endeavours has been constantly criticised by vocal minorities via bellicose statements on the internet and sometimes even through spontaneous small riots during public

Church events. This study will deal more specifically with the anti-ecumenical sentiments in the Orthodox world in its third chapter.

In any case, this internal dissension and disunion and the ensuing lack of stability has kept the Orthodox in a constant state of watchfulness and painful awareness that division has never ceased - and will never cease - to afflict the Church. It has revealed tensions between tradition and reform, between local and external, between Church and State. In particular the application of the Byzantine principle of *symphonia* whereby state and Church are expected to seamlessly cooperate in harmony while remaining essentially distinct had led to confusion in the modern era. This internal vulnerability of the Orthodox Church has brought a degree of insecurity and anxiety in its external exploits today.

1.4.3. Nationalism

As has been mentioned already, following the fall of Constantinople, the Church of Greece found itself in a rather unusual position as the Patriarch of Constantinople received an 'official' role from the Ottoman rule as 'responsible' for all Christians to the sultan. The administration of all Christian Churches (Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike) was thus placed under the control of the Ottoman-controlled Patriarchate of Constantinople. However, instead of bringing unity to the Orthodox Churches, this method of administration which propagated a forceful and strict centralisation brought about a spirit of division and a tendency towards increased nationalism. In the words of French-Russian theologian John Meyendorff:

Nationalism, that bane of modern Orthodoxy, began to flourish under the Turkish regime. There was Greek nationalism which identified Orthodoxy with Hellenism and the Greek longing for independence, and Slavic nationalism which forced the restoration of autocephalous churches in the nineteenth century by means of threats of revolt and in an atmosphere of mutual distrust [...]⁹³

Indeed, most of these Churches had had their Church hierarchy appointed by the Phanar from among the Phanariot Greek clergy, which created significant local ethnic tensions. In Greece the emasculating Turkish oppression and the way it had seized and utilized the Church as an Ottoman administrative instrument cultivated a mounting Hellenic nationalism and a fanatical yearning for freedom. The resulting nationalism has been ever since a 'bane' and a major corruption for most of the autocephalous Churches coming out of the Ottoman or other imperial powers in the nineteenth century.

⁹³ Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 90.

After the fall of the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian Empires, a number of national Orthodox Churches in Eastern Europe claimed their autocephaly and, implicitly, almost total independence from Constantinople. The Patriarchate of Constantinople was slow and reluctant in granting autocephalies as its influence as absolute centre of the Orthodox world was diminishing. Having broken themselves from the Ottoman world, the Churches in the Balkans and Eastern Europe became free to develop their own national identities and religious life. This emancipation was accompanied unfortunately by the rise of nationalism in Eastern Europe and the Balkans which, besides constituting a serious heresy, brought a concrete threat to European stability. Nationalism emerged quite clearly as one of the ideologies that were to lead to the two World Wars and all accompanying atrocities. In some countries, as was the case of Romania, nationalism led to an increasingly popular fascist ideology that reached holocaustic proportions, and later, in the case of Romania, to an alliance with Nazi Germany – all this while enjoying the tacit sanction of an important segment of the Orthodox hierarchy.

In the case of Russia, as was mentioned earlier, the impositions against the traditional Church of both Patriarch Nikon and Peter the Great were of clear ‘foreign’ extraction thus giving rise to nationalist trends of thought that sought to defend the inheritance of the Russian Orthodox Church. Russian national sentiments have also been encouraged by a certain veneration of the idealised reality of the Russian Orthodox empire as the ‘Third Rome’ – the ordained successor and continuator of Byzantium.

All these nationalist tendencies have contributed to the gradual self-isolation of local Orthodox Churches not only from non-Orthodox communities but also, to a degree, from the other Orthodox communities. As the notions of nation and Orthodoxy have become so closely associated this has encouraged the Orthodox to consider Orthodoxy as an inward-oriented reality and less as an outreaching ‘missionary’ or ‘universal’ one. When a Church’s ecclesial and ecclesiologic boundaries become superimposed onto ethnic or national borders this leads to a level of self-sufficiency and solipsism which finds a justification in the vision of one or a group of ‘Orthodox nations’.

Thus the way the Orthodox Churches present themselves nowadays in relation with their Christian partners – their particular mindset and ethos – demonstrate clear consequences of their more recent history. The long period of constant persecutions has made them suspicious, bitter and cynical with regard to a genuine disinterested co-operation with any foreign or external power or structure. At the same time the

Orthodox are still struggling to pinpoint their own identity in rather fluid social contexts, trying to grasp their relationship to the State, the tension between old and new, between tradition and modernity. Also, very importantly, they are still exploring their relationship with their respective national identities seeking clarity as to what extent they are *the* Church universal and orthodox, and to what extent they are the Church of one particular nation and locality.

The Orthodox Churches have had little time in which to settle and periodically re-evaluate their position in a changing world, and their point of reference has remained the centuries-old Byzantine reality. The era of the imperial Church and the greatness and brilliance of Byzantium, but also the great heresies, the Councils, the Great Schism, the Western 'betrayal' seem for the Orthodox to have happened yesterday, and it is still with those parameters of yesteryear that they tend to operate. However even a brief consideration of its historical background helps one understand how this is a Church – or group of Churches – which still bears the symptoms and afflictions of a serious trauma after a protracted and exhausting period of suffering, instability and confusion which has largely characterized its journey from the Schism and up to the present day.

To sum up very succinctly, this first chapter has revealed Orthodoxy as a complex theological reality, and not simply an ecclesial jurisdiction or a set of doctrines. It is primarily a way of life in Christ informed by a spirit of energy and action, by a vision of Tradition as 'a dynamic process of continuity and renewal in the Holy Spirit'.⁹⁴ It is a process of 'becoming', a perennial journey towards deification centred on the sacramental life of the Church. The fact that Orthodoxy as a concept appeared and was shaped in the period of the early Ecumenical Councils with a view to defend the Church from heresy and schism – a defensive attitude later strengthened during the Great Schism, and further reinforced in the centuries of oppression and confusion that were to follow – has kept the Orthodox Churches in a mechanical mode of suspicion and self-protection. This came somewhat in opposition to its fundamentally universal and communitarian theological scope.

This study will remain focused on the modern era by turning its attention in the next chapter to the phenomenon known as the 'ecumenical movement'. This chapter will start by presenting a brief survey of the history of the ecumenical movement, focusing on its origins, its initial aspirations, and its development through its first decades,

⁹⁴ Daniel Ciobotea (Metropolitan), *Confessing the truth in love*, p. 157.

starting with the early years of the twentieth century, and moving on to the World-War years and the post-war period – exploring also the Orthodox contributions to the ecumenical development. The second part of the next chapter will address the connection between ecumenism and theology as essentially a dynamic, active enterprise and a spiritual process of *metanoia* – not dissimilar to Orthodoxy itself.

CHAPTER TWO: ECUMENISM

The first chapter of this study has explored the meaning of Orthodoxy beyond the customary vision that the Orthodox Church is the one true Church of the apostolic times, and has revealed a vision of Orthodoxy as primarily *the* way of life in Christ, the fullness of truth which seeks inescapably to make itself known to the world – and not merely a set of doctrines. As the previous chapter has shown, the Orthodox have kept alive a spirit of dynamism and action, a vision of Tradition as a dynamic process of continuity and renewal in the Holy Spirit.

This second chapter will tackle the modern-history phenomenon of the ecumenical movement with a view to explore its origins, course and inner dynamics, thus enabling later a parallel examination of Orthodoxy and ecumenism, and eventually a better understanding of the tension between the two realities. The theological interaction between Orthodoxy and ecumenism will be the central focus of the third and next chapter of this study.

2.1. Ecumenism – a brief historical outline

‘Ecumenism is mostly struggle’, stated with some resignation the Roman Catholic/WCC Joint Working Group in 1975,¹ and perhaps no better words could precede any attempt to approach the ecumenical movement, its history, its course, its understanding or the current perceived status of impasse. For indeed there has been for the past decade a sense of crisis and resignation with regard to ecumenism, an anticlimactic feeling that, after having elicited copious hope and expectation in its beginning, the modern ecumenical movement has lost its original impetus, its driving enthusiasm, and has now reached a crossroads, is in a state of ‘transition’, ‘uncertainty’ and ‘stagnation’.² Gillian R. Evans spoke, about a decade ago, in her book on *Method in ecumenical theology*, about a ‘winter of ecumenism’ – albeit adding a prudent question mark to the phrase.³ Indeed one might be tempted to view the initial ecumenical fervour and commitment of old covered in stardust, as a heroic visionary enterprise.

1 ‘Ecumenism today. A survey by the RC/WCC Joint Working Group’, *One in Christ*, 11, 30-87, p 87, quoted in Gillian R Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology: the lessons so far* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p 6. The quote goes on to say: ‘We do not find cynicism. We find frustration and struggle, and we find commitment and faith, and we find profound insight and vision for what ought to be done.’

2 Aram I, ‘The ecumenical movement at a crossroads’, in *The Ecumenical Review*, 47, quoted in William C. Ingle-Gillis, *The Trinity and ecumenical Church thought. The Church-event* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 7.

3 The phrase was used as title of the first introductory chapter of the book. G. R. Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology: the lessons so far* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp 19-40. As noted by Jeremy Morris, the phrase ‘ecumenical winter’ has, through frequent use ‘come into fashion’, though its origins are unclear. In Jeremy Morris, ‘Edinburgh 1910-2010: A retrospective assessment’, in *Ecclesiology* 7 (2011), p. 313, footnote 53.

Sadly however, dwelling on the historical beginnings of the ecumenical movement will be unlikely to inspire fresh and renewed enthusiasm and solutions vis-à-vis the apparent crisis as it stands today. That is due to the fact that the various initiatives, movements and institutions emerging at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, though later to coalesce in an increasingly unitary and coherent vision of ecumenism, were initially motivated by differing goals, needs and perspectives, some of which may be perceived today as irrelevant or indeed contrary to a modern understanding of ecumenism. More importantly, a very different and rapidly changing historical context at the turn of the century is another obvious reason why that same original ecumenical motivation is no longer to be sought today.

That said, an exploration of the early decades of modern ecumenism, like the one this study will attempt at the beginning of this second chapter, can of course cast a revealing light on ecumenism, its legacy and its development. However such a survey will also highlight the necessity of discovering a new understanding of ecumenism which, in order to remain successful, in the words of William Ingle-Gillis, 'must embrace theological expression and pastoral dynamics that surpass not only the historical causes of division, but historical reunion efforts too, insofar as those efforts have not finally borne fruit'.⁴

Thus, after a brief historical survey concentrating primarily on the appearance of ecumenism and its development from the first decades, but also following the road of ecumenism to date, this chapter will tackle the various theological understandings of ecumenism. The divergence or diversity of approaches that will unfold will not be treated as a sign of crisis. Rather, as has been argued by Tillard and Evans, this failure in reaching agreement or consensus becomes in itself 'a phenomenon of ecumenical theology which ought to be taken into account in discussion of its processes'.⁵

This will take the chapter to its next stage: an exploration of the possibility of a new paradigm for modern ecumenism – 'the next steps' – which rather than resting on 'expectations', conjectures and implicit 'disappointments,' aims to interpret ecumenism as an ongoing process of which 'failures' are an organic and necessary part. As suggested by Evans, 'setbacks are still marks of progress, for they do not take us right back to the beginning [...] the ecumenical task is enormous and we have to adopt a

⁴ William C. Ingle-Gillis, *The trinity and ecumenical Church thought. The Church-event* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 7.

⁵ G. R. Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology: the lessons so far* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 2. Also see J. M. R. Tillard, 'Elements of unity in recent ecumenical discussion', *One in Christ*, H (:978), 94-105, pp. 94-5 (quoted in Evans).

timescale appropriate to the scale of the problems.’⁶ The quest for the new paradigm plans also to address the goals, methodology but also the ethos and spiritual core of ecumenism.

The syntagm ‘modern ecumenical movement’ will be used throughout this chapter to differentiate from the more general understanding of ecumenism as a continuous aspiration and activity of the Church, its origins going back to the time of Christ, the Apostles and the early Church. Although this study will refer back to the core of the Christian faith in its biblical expression and through the understanding of the tradition of the Church, the main focus will remain the recent phenomenon which involves most of the Churches worldwide and which is known as ‘the ecumenical movement’.

2.1.1. The origins of modern ecumenism

The second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century ushered in a novel context for the Christian Churches worldwide. With the gradual downfall of the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the century, important political changes occurred both in Western Europe and in the Balkans. Industrialization was leaving its mark on the working classes in America and Western Europe and the massive waves of immigration from Europe to America significantly altered the religious landscape of the latter and contributed to new relationships between the Churches.

As one historian pointed out, this age was ‘the first great period of globalization’.⁷ The world had shrunk due to the advances in communication and transport – telegraph, railway, steamship – which greatly facilitated the establishment of a considerable number of international societies and organizations, many of which were of a Christian or philanthropic character. In the words of Thomas E. FitzGerald – an Orthodox scholar and author of *The ecumenical movement: an introductory history* (a publication of the World Council of Churches), to which this chapter will be greatly indebted – ‘distant concerns were taking on new significance for Americans and Europeans.’⁸ Most importantly, through the increasing sphere of influence that the United States and Western Europe had acquired globally, these ‘distant concerns’ soon became rather ‘domestic’ through the expansion of the empires in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, an expansion which was accompanied immediately by a new zeal among the Churches for missionary activity in these regions. However in the field of mission the

⁶ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 5.

⁷ E. Hobsbawm cited in Jeremy Morris, ‘Edinburgh 1910-2010: A retrospective assessment’, in *Ecclesiology* 7 (2011), p. 301.

⁸ Thomas E. FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement: an introductory history* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), p. 60.

diversity of European Christianity proved detrimental and often puzzled the would-be converts.⁹ Also questions of a pragmatic nature arose, around the turn of the century, with regard to the increasing and widening of the missionary activity of Protestant denominations. These questions referred to the co-ordination of the numerous missionary organizations, their leadership, as well as their cultural adaptation to the new environments.

The widening of this (mostly Protestant) missionary activity at the turn of the century in conjunction with imperial expansion carried with what has been perceived to be an intrinsic compromise. And as this missionary growth is seen as closely connected with the origins of modern ecumenism, it has served to fuel Orthodox suspicion of both Protestantism and ecumenism. As FitzGerald notes: 'Christianity had been presented by mainly white missionaries, who had introduced Western architecture and religious practice, such actions subsequently giving rise to the charge that they had been culturally imperialist, even racist.'¹⁰ But other Orthodox have been even keener to expose the context as an inherently unjust 'colonial' one. As put, for instance, by Orthodox American scholar Peter Alban Heers:

The dream of converting the heathen across the globe was stimulated by, and came on the heels of, colonial expansion and conquest and thus was largely dependent upon the Western powers, especially Great Britain and America, for its practical implementation. In the marriage of mission and colonialism, therefore, in addition to the passion for "Christianizing" the world there was added the task of "civilizing" it.¹¹

However convenient an argument this may be for discrediting these early aspirations to confessional unity, it would be rather unfair to see these Protestant endeavours merely as part of some sort of imperialistic machine seeking to accumulate new dominions and pragmatically ironing out all obstacles in the process. As the famous Edinburgh World Missionary Conference was to prove in 1910, there was genuine commitment towards unity and mission and if some missionaries 'did indeed support imperialism, and the "civilizing mission" of European culture', in the words of Jeremy Morris, 'yet many others were deeply sceptical of the justice and effectiveness of imperial rule, and much more critical of official government policy than has often been realized'.¹²

⁹ See Jeremy Morris, *The Church in the modern age* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 58.

¹⁰ George D. Chryssides, *Christianity today* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2010), p. 94.

¹¹ Fr. Peter Alban Heers, 'The missionary origins of modern ecumenism. Milestones leading up to 1920' (An address prepared for the Academic Conference, The Mission of the Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, Athens, May 15, 2005), Accessed on 1 February 2012, <http://Orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/Heers-TheMissionaryRootsofModernEcumenism.pdf>

¹² Jeremy Morris, 'Edinburgh 1910-2010: A retrospective assessment', in *Ecclesiology* 7 (2011), p. 303.

After a start that had been perhaps less than sensitive to cultural interactions, the Protestant Churches were now beginning to look for methods that would be more open to the new cultures that they were encountering. All of this effervescent missionary activity gave rise to a number of organizations and events starting from as early as the second half of the nineteenth century. The Evangelical Alliance was established in 1846 during a London conference, which gathered together approximately 500 persons from Europe and the United States belonging to 52 different Protestant Churches. The general need for Churches to work together but also to *witness* together became increasingly pressing and obvious in the first decade of the twentieth century – particularly, as has already been mentioned, for the Protestant Churches in the missionary field – and an event of particular importance, the World Missionary Conference (WMC), was convened in Edinburgh in 1910 to respond to that need.

2.1.2. *The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference*

In the modern history of the ecumenical movement, the World Missionary Conference played an enormously significant role. The 1910 Edinburgh conference is said to have ‘inaugurated twentieth century ecumenism’,¹³ to have been the ‘formative event in the emergence of the modern ecumenical movement’,¹⁴ to be a ‘watershed’ in ecumenical history.¹⁵ Indeed it has been said that the ecumenical movement ‘dates from’ Edinburgh 1910.¹⁶ This gathering brought together over a thousand participants from the Protestant world and has been identified as a seminal event due to the extraordinary degree of interest it generated in the ‘difficulties inherent in the disunity of the Churches and the need to find opportunities for cooperation’,¹⁷ and in offering a platform for the discussion of issues related to Christian missions and cooperation in the missionary field.

As mentioned earlier, the Conference was not intended to merely serve the missionaries as an effective problem-solving platform. Beyond such pragmatism there was a deep and genuine commitment to unity. The widening of the missionary sphere which followed the expansion of empires may have brought some form of assurance

¹³ The Roman Catholic ecumenist George Tavad cited by Morris, ‘Edinburgh 1910-2010: A retrospective assessment’, p. 300.

¹⁴ Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen (ed.), *Ecumenical ecclesiology: unity, diversity and otherness in a fragmented world* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009), p. 13.

¹⁵ Ruth Rouse, ‘Voluntary movements and the changing ecumenical climate’, in *A History of the ecumenical movement, 1517-1948*, ed. Rouse and Neill (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), p. 300.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 82.

regarding a future global Christian world, but this did not render the participants agents of the Empire. On the contrary, there were many critics of imperialism and of government policy.¹⁸ The Conference was not an ecumenical event *per se*, as it addressed resolutely the Protestant Churches, without inviting other denominations to the proceedings.

Having as watchword the ambitious phrase 'The evangelisation of the world in this generation', the Conference brought a special kind of prophetic energy and excitement, an 'emotional intensity' that left a deep impression on all involved.¹⁹ The time was ripe, it seemed, for the Kingdom of God to be established on earth – and not only metaphorically but as a soon-to-be-achieved reality.²⁰ An interesting and somewhat unexpected Orthodox interpretation also suggests that there was even a sense of *metanoia*, of repentance in the face of Christian division, of secularism and of earlier proselytism and that the Edinburgh Conference took place 'in this spirit of renewed conscience.'²¹

Most important however is the fact that the Conference established a Continuation Committee, which meant that it would not be seen as a singular event, but that its work was to be continued and developed by similar future meetings.²² In so doing the ecumenical endeavour was acknowledged for the first time as a 'work in progress' and a tradition for regular successive inter-Christian encounters was established. This event marked the shift from singular ecumenical events to an ongoing ecumenical 'movement'.

2.1.3. *Faith and Order*

While the Edinburgh Conference was itself unable to 'deal with issues of faith and order' on its own, this very 'failure' was in fact to generate further significant achievements.²³ The Episcopal American Bishop Charles Brent became convinced of the need for another wider gathering that would address the more general theological issues of Church disunity. Thus he fostered the idea of a Conference on Faith and Order, which he presented and appealed for support for at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in October, 1910. The General Convention approved a resolution

¹⁸ Morris, 'Edinburgh 1910-2010', p. 303.

¹⁹ Morris, 'Edinburgh 1910-2010', pp. 299-300.

²⁰ This was evident in the opening speech from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, when he said that there are 'some standing here to-night who shall not taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God come with power', cited in Morris, 'Edinburgh 1910-2010', p. 299.

²¹ Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, p. 251.

²² See Morris, 'Edinburgh 1910-2010'.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

that created a commission 'to bring about a conference for the consideration of questions touching Faith and Order, and that all Christian Communion throughout the world which confess Our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour be asked to unite with us in arranging for and conducting such a Conference.'²⁴

The Episcopal Church then proceeded in 1911 to submit its proposal for a Faith and Order Conference to the leaders of the Churches throughout the entire world. The proposal was thereby disseminated not only among Protestant Churches but also among Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, and called upon all of these to gather at a conference 'based upon a clear statement and full consideration of those things in which we differ, as well as those things in which we are one.'²⁵ The proposal was met positively by many of the Orthodox leaders, who were willing to participate in a conference of this type. Things were a bit more complex in the Catholic context. Catholic hierarchy resolutely regarded the Protestant Churches as 'heretical'. Moreover the fact that the anti-modernist campaign initiated by Pope Pius X was in full swing – an attitude that would not be in any way tolerant of ecumenism, and which persevered, albeit more moderately under Pius X's successor, Benedict XIV from 1914²⁶ – made it very unlikely that the Roman Catholic Church would be interested in participating, and indeed it declined the proposal. In the meantime participants from the Protestant and Orthodox Churches had a preliminary meeting in New York in May, 1913 and convened to decide upon a set of principles for the future Conference on Faith and Order. These included: participation from all Christian Churches, the tackling of 'issues of difference and agreement', that 'no plan of unity to be immediately proposed' and that the agenda for the future conference was to be formulated in advance.²⁷

It is interesting to note that the early Orthodox participants embarked upon these meetings with seeming ease, pursuing an aspiration towards unity that they too had been nurturing for some time. From as early as 1902 the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople had been in contact with other Orthodox Churches regarding the issue of dialogue among the various Christian Churches.²⁸ What is significant, however, is that the way the Orthodox related to the other Churches from an ecclesiological point of view in those pre-war years was to remain basically unchanged: unity essentially

²⁴ Quoted in FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 83.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The Catholic Church was later to openly criticize the ecumenical movement as 'indifferentism', through Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Mortalium animos* of 1928. See Morris, 'Edinburgh 1910-2010', p. 302.

²⁷ FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 84.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 104.

lies within the Orthodox faith. Also the Orthodox were already mindful of the difficulties which lay ahead, not least the issue of the 'serious doctrinal differences'.²⁹ This concern is expressed in Patriarch Joachim III's early encyclical of 1902:

Of course, *the union of them and all who believe in Christ with us in the Orthodox faith* is the pious and heartfelt desire of our Church and of all genuine Christians who stand firm in the evangelical doctrine of unity, and it is the subject of constant prayer and supplication; but at the same time we are not unaware that this pious desire comes up against the unbroken persistence of these Churches in doctrines on which, having taken their stand as on a base hardened by the passage of time, they seem quite disinclined to join a road to union, such as is pointed out by evangelical truth.³⁰

This was the approach of the Orthodox from their very first ecumenical involvements, and they articulated it in a candid but mature way. And yet despite their *Una Sancta* ecclesiology their quest for unity remained unabated and their commitment unchanged. And this commitment was to lead later to the famous Patriarchal encyclical of 1920, which this study will discuss at a later stage.

The outbreak of World War I brought the Faith and Order negotiations to a sudden halt. They were resumed, however, after the end of the war, and perhaps with an even greater vigour. The Episcopal Church Commission sent a delegation to Europe to meet with Orthodox and Catholic leaders. Once again many Orthodox Church leaders received the delegation with warmth and interest. The delegation was not able however to meet Pope Benedict XV in Rome. Also a number of Protestant Church leaders in Germany refused to become involved in the conference at the time.

The first Conference on Faith and Order was convened in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1927 and brought together about four hundred participants representing 127 Orthodox, Anglican, Old Catholic, and Protestant Churches. This meeting was one of the first to bring together participants from different Churches and countries and established an extremely important precedent. The event featured some of the very active pioneers of ecumenism such as the American Bishop Charles Brent, Swedish Lutheran Bishop Nathan Soderblom, and Orthodox Metropolitan Germanos Strenopoulos from Constantinople.

2.1.4. Life and Work

In parallel with the Faith and Order movement, the Life and Work movement was also in a process of development. Life and Work was a descendant of the earlier World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches. During a

²⁹ Cited in FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 82.

³⁰ Ibid., my italics.

conference which the World Alliance held in The Hague in 1919, Swedish Archbishop Nathan Soderblom presented his vision for the creation of a Council of Churches, which could offer a platform for the Churches to collaborate on social issues despite any differences in doctrine. The general approval with which Soderblom's proposal was met led to a new project – the Life and Work movement.

The work of these two movements, Faith and Order and Life and Work, synchronized in such a way that it led to their two major conferences being held in close succession in 1937. Life and Work held its conference in Oxford in July, and the second World Conference on Faith and Order was held in Edinburgh, in August. The participants in Oxford had approved a motion proposing that the two movements come together and form the World Council of Churches. This proposal, not initially on the official agenda, was put forward to the delegates of the Faith and Order meeting in Edinburgh and 'after a long and difficult discussion', the delegates to the Edinburgh Conference passed a motion supporting the establishment of the World Council of Churches.³¹

2.1.5. *The Orthodox initiative*

As was already mentioned, parallel and similar efforts towards a reconciliation of the Churches and the creation of a 'League of Churches' were made rather vigorously by the Orthodox camp. In fact Orthodox historians much prefer the Patriarch of Constantinople's Encyclical of 1920 as a possible birth certificate for the ecumenical movement. This letter is the first formal statement of the twentieth century to be addressed from a Christian Church to other Churches of different traditions raising the issue of reconciliation and unity, but also of the establishment of a fellowship of Churches.³² The encyclical boldly states:

Our own church holds that rapprochement between the various Christian Churches and fellowship between them is not excluded by the doctrinal differences which exist between them. In our opinion such a rapprochement is highly desirable and necessary. It would be useful in many ways for the real interest of each particular church and of the whole Christian body, and also for the preparation and advancement of that blessed union which will be completed in the future in accordance with the will of God. We therefore consider that the present time is most favourable for bringing up this important question and studying it together.³³

As seen in the excerpt above, the Patriarchate of Constantinople took a very bold step, and the enthusiasm and impetus of the Encyclical perhaps overshadowed some key

³¹ FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 86.

³² See Thomas FitzGerald, 'The Patriarchal Encyclicals on Christian unity', in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 22:3 (1977), pp. 303-304.

³³ 'Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1920', in Gennadios Limouris (ed.), *Orthodox visions of ecumenism* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), p. 9.

Orthodox concerns: the reference for instance to the 'Christian Churches' (in the plural), and to 'doctrinal differences' that can neither exclude a 'fellowship', nor even the advancement towards a 'blessed union'. The quote above however, very importantly mentions the 'present time' – 1920 – as 'most favourable for considering such a rapprochement. No interpretation of this document should be attempted, as has often been the case in some of the more eager Orthodox circles, without acknowledging and understanding the historical context in which it was produced.

Views regarding the 'legitimacy' of the Patriarchal Encyclical are divided in the Orthodox world and, while some scholars regard it with a degree of scepticism, most writers will refer to it with pride as the spark that lit up the modern ecumenical movement. Indeed it may be said that, before a non-Protestant commitment to the ecumenical endeavour also occurred, one cannot speak of ecumenism in its modern understanding, and the Patriarchal Encyclical very clearly demonstrates the willingness and dedication of the Orthodox to the cause. The fact that intense Orthodox commitment and interest in an ecumenical collaboration came immediately after World War I, might also point to the fact that a crisis different from the missionary impasse that began to manifest itself before the war in the Protestant world was the cause of this abrupt concern. This crisis was in fact a reaction to the horrors of the global war the world had just endured and this initiative appears very much like a movement of repentance, a premise supported by a number of scholars.³⁴ It was also a reaction to the then quite recent Soviet Revolution of 1917, which, after harsh persecutions of the Russian Orthodox Church and vigorous attempts to obliterate it altogether, did not paint too hopeful a picture for the largest of the Orthodox Churches.

However, though often seen as an unexpected initiative, the Patriarchal Encyclical did not in fact appear quite as an unanticipated post-World War I impulse. As mentioned already, Constantinople had in fact been in contact with other Orthodox Churches since 1902 with regard to the issue of dialogue with the other Christian Churches, something which had generated a number of positive responses.³⁵ Thus, the initiative of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople to propose the formation of a League of Churches was the fruition of an older interest that had been ripening for nearly two decades.

³⁴ See for instance Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, pp. 231-258. Also Michael Kinnamon, *The vision of the Ecumenical Movement: and how it has been impoverished by its friends* (Atlanta: Chalice Press, 2003), p. 118

³⁵ FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 104.

It should be noted that by following so closely on the heels of Protestant missionary initiatives towards an ecumenical rapprochement, the Constantinople Patriarchate has occasionally found itself in trouble, particularly in later decades. A certain sourness arose amongst some Orthodox scholars with regard to the Protestant missionary roots of ecumenism. Indeed this has constituted one of the sources of distrust within some Orthodox circles towards ecumenism up to this day. Inasmuch as the project of the Ecumenical Patriarchate was inspired and influenced by previous Protestant efforts in the missionary field, for some this has 'tainted' not only the origins of the ecumenical movement preceding the Encyclical of 1920, but the nature and goal of the Encyclical itself. What is often overlooked is the fact that during this formative period the context, the immediate priorities and perspectives of Christians of all denominations, Orthodox included, differed vastly from those of subsequent years.

2.1.6. *The Anglican 'Appeal to All Christian People'*

At the Lambeth Conference of 1920, one of its resulting resolutions, the 'Appeal to All Christian People', is unanimously perceived to be its most significant outcome,³⁶ perhaps not surprisingly given that the theme of the conference was the reunion of Churches. This was a crucial theme at the time, in the wake of the First World War, as there was a strong feeling that 'the "war to end war" must usher in a new era of peace'.³⁷ In the specifically British context, the Conference sought to bring together the Anglican Church and the 'non-episcopal' protestant Churches. However the 'Appeal to All Christian People' served also as an important impetus to the (ecumenical) movement and a strong encouragement for Anglicans to join it'.³⁸

The Anglican Appeal is prophetic in its tone and envisions a future universal Church serving an undivided Christ:

The times call us to a new outlook and new measure. ... The vision which rises before us is that of a Church, genuinely Catholic, loyal to all Truth and gathering into its fellowship all 'who profess and call themselves Christians', within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith and order, bequeathed as a heritage by the past to present, shall be possessed in common, and made serviceable to the whole Body of Christ.³⁹

It is time, seems to be the message of the Anglican bishops, and 'the times' call for pressing action to be taken to gather all Christians into a fellowship, in an attempt to

³⁶ Charlotte Methuen, 'Lambeth 1920: The Appeal to All Christian people. An account by G. K. A. Bell and the redactions of the Appeal'. In Melanie Barber et al (ed.), *From the Reformation to the permissive society. A miscellany in celebration of the 400th anniversary of Lambeth Palace Library* (Church of England Records Society, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), p. 323.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 533.

³⁹ Quoted in Ingle-Gillis, *The Trinity and ecumenical Church thought*, p. 3.

‘reach out towards the goal of a reunited Catholic Church’.⁴⁰ A new perspective was needed that reinterpreted and revived the inheritance of the past, a new paradigm that was to enable an appropriate service for the one Church of Christ. The Appeal’s ‘sense of urgency’⁴¹ stemmed from its resonance with the troubled, inexorable context of the period, one which required the ministry of a united credible Church more than ever.

2.1.7. *The World Council of Churches*

In the wake of the wider efforts towards rapprochement of the Protestant Churches, the initiative and work of the Constantinople Patriarchate, as well as that of the Anglican Appeal, a joint Committee of 14 delegates was appointed by the Life and Work Conference at Oxford and the Faith and Order Conference at Edinburgh in 1937. Its purpose was to explore and discuss the establishment of a World Council of Churches and its first meeting took place in Utrecht in May 1938, by which point times had become troubled once again in Europe. Indeed the initial proposed date for a general assembly of the Council was set for August 1941 but had to be postponed due to the start of yet another even crueller World War. The Organizational Committee had nevertheless managed to progress significantly on a number of issues.

The main objective of the Committee was the establishment of a foundation for the council by addressing the issues of basis, membership structure, and authority. After extended deliberations the Committee stated that: ‘The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches, which accept Our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.’⁴² British Archbishop William Temple, who had been appointed chairman of the future council, emphasized that ‘the Council desires to be a fellowship of those Churches which accept these truths. But it does not concern itself with the manner in which the Churches interpret them. It will therefore be the responsibility of each particular Church to decide whether it can collaborate on this basis.’⁴³ The Committee then sent out in 1938 a formal letter of invitation to almost 200 Churches, signed by a number of leading theologians, including the Orthodox Archbishop Germanos Strenopoulos and renowned Orthodox scholar Georges Florovsky. Archbishop Temple also addressed a letter to the Vatican Secretary of State presenting the plans for the council, and, though there were some indications that the Vatican was open for a degree of exchange, the Roman Catholic Church nonetheless indicated that it would not formally participate in the new body.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 109.

⁴³ Quoted in FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 109.

Things were moving apace and the new council's shape, structure and ethos were becoming increasingly clear. However this embryonic state of the council, then represented through its provisional committee, had to be extended for seven more years due to the outbreak of World War II. Although it remained active to an extent throughout the war by conducting a number of meetings in the United States, England and Switzerland, as well as by being involved in chaplaincy and pastoral care of prisoners of war and assistance of refugees, the fledgling council led a rather 'clandestine', semi-official operation until its first General Assembly was held after the war, in 1948. This is an important point to consider when analyzing the beginnings of the post-war ecumenical movement and its central representation manifested by the World Council of Churches. The only possible way to emerge from this most terrible of crimes against humanity could be in a spirit of humility and painful realism, but also with a renewed and strengthened commitment to unity and peace. These catastrophic events also dictated a sense of urgency which, while hastening up proceedings, prevented the Council from giving proper preliminary reflection and analysis to the new (still shifting) global context and its associated theological implications, a problem which was to significantly mar the early work of the Council.

Not surprisingly, the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Amsterdam between August and September 1948, addressed the theme of 'Man's Disorder and God's Designs', a fitting topic to proceed from the bloodiest conflict in the history of humankind. This Assembly was an unprecedented event in modern Church history through its sheer scale and diversity. It attracted delegates from 147 Churches in 44 countries, Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican. The assembly was conducted in a spirit of discovery and a general acknowledgement that it still represented 'work in progress'. Its main purpose was to reach formal decisions regarding the basis, constitution and structure of the Council. Many of these issues remained insufficiently articulated and were later readdressed by the meeting of the Central Committee in Toronto, in 1950. The Amsterdam Assembly signalled a unified commitment of all participants to the cause of unity stating that:

We are one in acknowledging [our Lord Jesus Christ] as God and Saviour. We are divided from one another not only in matters of faith, order and tradition, but also by pride of nation, class and race. But Christ has made us His own, and He is not divided. In seeking Him we find one another. Here at Amsterdam we have committed ourselves afresh to Him, and have covenanted with one another in constituting the World Council of Churches. We intend to stay together.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Quoted in FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 110.

The core basis of the council's membership was defined as the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. The very strong character of a 'covenant' must also be noted here, alongside the idea of an implicit union in Christ, who cannot be divided. Thus, while acknowledging the divisions in matters of faith and tradition, the participants expressed their commitment to seek unity but also to stay together despite – the statement seems to say – whatever else history may bring. This initial sense of members not merely participating but entering into a covenant and vigorous commitment was to be carried over to the future assemblies and meetings over the coming decades. This approach shaped a council which, despite inherent subsequent disagreements, struggles and fallings out, remained stubbornly committed to its quest for unity.

Refining some of the themes addressed previously in Amsterdam, the Statement of the Toronto Central Committee sought to bring to the fore the centrality of the member Churches and the significance of their participation in the council while, at the same time, recognizing that member Churches had differing ecclesiologies and perceptions of one another. Its intention was to promote the position that the council was not the expression of an already united Church, or a sort of 'super-church'. The issue of union/unity also received deeper treatment, with the statement stressing that the council 'does not negotiate union between churches' and it 'cannot and should not be based on any one particular conception of the church'. It also emphasized that membership of the Church 'is more inclusive' than the membership in one's own Church, but membership of the World Council 'does not imply that each church must regard the other member churches as churches in the true and full sense of the word.' The covenantal character of the Council was once again consolidated in the statement's pronouncement that the Churches 'should recognize their solidarity with each other, render assistance to each other in case of need, and refrain from such actions as are incompatible with brotherly relationships.'⁴⁵

An extremely important document for the modern ecumenical movement, the Toronto Statement set out key parameters for the ecumenical encounters that were to follow within the World Council of Churches, but also, arguably, outside it. However, while setting out to clarify a number of issues and dispel a number of anxieties, it also introduced several 'underlying tensions' which have remained within the Council up to this day.⁴⁶ By stating that 'there is a place in the World Council both for those

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 111.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Churches which recognize other Churches as Churches in the full and true sense, and for those which do not',⁴⁷ the statement already hints to the inability of the Orthodox to accept the model of one Church comprised of many denominations, the so-called 'branch' model.⁴⁸ By this stage the Orthodox were actively participating in and contributing to the ecumenical proceedings and the first divergences were beginning to show.

The theme of 'Christ – The Hope of the World' drew together the second General Assembly of the Council in Evanston in 1954, with an increased number of 502 delegates representing 161 Churches. Again the theme responded to the harsh post-war context, with the intensifying Cold War and racism as main – but tacit, in the case of the Iron Curtain – concerns. The discussions focused on Christian disunity, the mission of the Church, the responsible society, world community, racial and ethnic tensions, the laity, and the Christian vocation.⁴⁹ The Orthodox participants failed to relate to these concerns as expressed from a mainly Western perspective, and produced two separate statements from the official one of the Assembly.⁵⁰

The next assembly took place in New Delhi, India, in 1961, and heralded a change in the demographics of the council, by receiving many new Protestant Churches from Asia and Africa, but also the Orthodox Churches of Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland – a reminder that the council was not a solely American-European affair. The fact that many Churches from the Communist Block joined the council at the peak of the Cold War also had very important political implications. Though many of these Eastern European Orthodox participants were in fact sent by the communist regimes as a sign of good will, an appearance of democracy and, not least, to spread propaganda about communist supremacy, their participation in the Council also constituted one of the few channels of communication with the outer world and an important opportunity for support for the oppressed Churches of the east.

One further crucial change was brought by the following Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1968. This Assembly came in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1963-65) and the subsequent ecumenical opening of the Roman Catholic Church, which had led, three years prior to the Assembly, to the establishment of a Joint Working Group

47 'The Toronto Statement', accessed on 1 June, 2012,
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/toronto-1950/toronto-statement.html>.

48 FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 111.

49 Ibid., p. 112.

50 See FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 112.

between the Vatican and the WCC. The Roman Catholic Church now proclaimed a new understanding of relationships with other Christian communities, which were acknowledged as fellow pilgrims.⁵¹ The Assembly received 15 official observers from the Vatican and even signalled the possibility that the Roman Catholic Church might join the WCC in the future. This never has eventuated, however, and the recent developments both in the ecumenical movement and in the Catholic Church have now pushed this possibility indefinitely into the future.⁵²

2.1.8. Reflections on the beginnings of the ecumenical movement

Having briefly surveyed the appearance and development of ecumenism in modern history and also the steps towards unity taken by the Churches in response to some of the main events of the 20th century, we are now able to analyse more closely what it was that has generated and maintained the ecumenical movement. It appears evident that reasons of both a pragmatic order but also of an ideological, psychological nature – and ultimately of faith – informed the birth of ecumenism at the turn of the twentieth century. On a pragmatic level, as has been mentioned, Protestant Churches were faced with an increasing confessional and structural fragmentation that was at odds with the expansion of Western civilization and Christianity in an ever-shrinking world. This fragmentation became acutely evident in the field of mission. With a lack of coherence in the activity of the Churches, the credibility of Western Churches was undermined and incapacitated greatly their missionary attempts. Beyond pragmatism there was also a genuine aspiration towards Christian unity, not only as an imperial necessity, but as something that is inextricably linked with Christian mission in its purest theological understanding. This was evidenced by such events as the World Missionary Conference of 1910, and by documents such as the Anglican ‘Appeal to All Christian People’ issued at the 1920 Lambeth Conference.

For the Orthodox, fragmentation was also an immediate practical concern, though under an entirely different set of circumstances. The Ecumenical Patriarchate in particular became increasingly worried by the number of national Orthodox Churches appearing in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires, Churches which now claimed their autocephaly and, implicitly, almost total independence from Constantinople. As the Patriarchate of Constantinople acquiesced half-heartedly and granted autocephalies, it saw its political influence as a former

⁵¹ Morris, *The Church in the modern age*, p. 92.

⁵² The Uppsala Assembly also focused heavily on the issues of racism and social justice and how the Churches might address these issues. In fact, Dr Martin Luther King was supposed to open the Uppsala Assembly but was assassinated four months earlier.

‘centre’ of much of the Orthodox world subsiding. More importantly it could not help but notice the rise of nationalism in Eastern Europe and the Balkans which, before constituting a grave theological error, represented a concrete threat to European stability. Having emancipated themselves from Ottoman rule, the Churches in the Balkans and Eastern Europe (Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania) became free to develop their own national identities and religious life. These movements, though, were often marred by nationalistic and ethnic enmity in the fluid and troubled context that followed World War I. Nationalism was in fact quite clearly one of the ideologies that were to feed and lead to the Second World War and all of its preceding atrocities. In some countries, as was the case for Romania, nationalism –with a degree of (unofficial) support from the newly autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church led to an increasingly popular fascist ideology that reached holocaustic proportions. Indeed in the case of Romania these propensities led to an alliance with Nazi Germany by the beginning of World War II.

Division, ethnic and otherwise, was the plague of the times and central platforms for dialogue, co-operation and reconciliation were needed at all societal levels. This became, again, a pragmatic necessity from both a secular and a theological perspective. This need was made even more palpable after two world wars that followed in succession within the space of less than four decades, and a large-scale Holocaust, the horrors of which had never been paralleled in human history. These times also presented the Churches with a different and grave predicament of a doctrinal or ‘ideological’ nature. ‘The times’ are very much the issue here, as they witnessed what may have been perceived as a ‘betrayal’ of the Churches, and of the very Christian message. Churches became increasingly ‘guilty’ of becoming part of and implicit collaborators with a series of injustices and brutalities.

The Protestant Churches participated actively in the Western colonial expansion into Asia and Africa, and became ‘accomplices’ in a series of cultural and racial iniquities, foreign to the core of the Christian faith. At the same time, Orthodox Churches saw the spread of *phyletism* – in Orthodox terms a heresy, also known as *ethno-phyletism* – which implies the bringing of nationalism into ecclesial matters and implicitly the confusion between Church and nation⁵³ – a state of affairs that has been tacitly accepted in the Orthodox world for the past century, after the creation of the various new national Orthodox Churches. It is perfectly possible nowadays, according to this

⁵³ See Vladimir Lossky, the chapter on ‘Theology and mysticism in the tradition of the Eastern Church’, in *The mystical theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), pp. 7-23.

view, to speak of a Russian Orthodoxy, a Greek Orthodoxy or a Romanian Orthodoxy as distinct realities with independent agendas within the Orthodox world. Thus in the foreign contexts of Orthodox diasporas there often appeared parallel overlapping jurisdictions for the same locality. In the United Kingdom, for instance, a number of dioceses representing almost all of the Orthodox local Churches (Greek, Antiochian, Serbian, Romanian etc) have been acting for a very long time independently of one another, in a state dangerously resembling one of missionary rivalry (although a diffident Pan-Orthodox Assembly of Bishops for Great Britain and Ireland was finally created in 2010 with a view to better co-ordinate the various Orthodox endeavours). For many Orthodox believers from cradle-Orthodox countries, to be Russian, Greek or Serbian means to be Orthodox, and, by correlation, to be Orthodox has come to represent the validation of one's national or ethnic identity.

Phyletism also became associated with the nationalist extreme-right in a number of Eastern European countries and ended up playing a significant role in the fascist movement. In Romania, for instance, the 'national mystique of "Romanianism"' was promoted during the interwar period 'both by Iron Guard ideologues and by several Romanian theologians.'⁵⁴ The Iron Guard – an ultra-nationalist, fascist inter-war political organisation – promoted a brand of nationalism interwoven with elements of the Orthodox doctrine, whereby Romanians were seen as a chosen nation with its own distinctive Orthodoxy. *Phyletism* not only represented a characteristic vice in those times, but has remained a reality with which the Orthodox Churches have had to wrestle in the following decades and up to this day.

It was the experience of the two World Wars and the Holocaust that gave rise to the ecumenical movement, more so, this study suggests, than the various pragmatic problems and inefficiencies of the epoch. Even if in its very beginnings the modern ecumenical movement attempted to solve issues of a very practical nature the speed and tenacity with which it spread and crystallized in the first half of the twentieth century, the unparalleled global involvement and the impetus to establish an international platform of a great number of Churches belonging to different (and in some cases *very different*) traditions despite the long and deeply-rooted historical divisions and theological divergences – all this seems to suggest there was a principal drive of a different nature.

⁵⁴ Juliana Conovici, 'Re-weaving memory: representations of the interwar and communist periods in the Romanian Orthodox Church after 1989', in *Journal for the study of religions and ideologies*, vol. 12, Issue 35 (Summer 2013): 109-131, p. 122.

This study suggests that this was a movement of repentance – as already put forth by some scholars⁵⁵ – a movement that envisioned a fundamental change and involved an act of faith, a movement of *metanoia*. This view and its close association with concepts that are central and essential to Orthodox theology will be of particular relevance to the overall scope of this study. It is a phenomenon that operated on the ideological and doctrinal level, on a psychological and philosophical level, but most importantly on the level of Christian *praxis*, of faith, of spiritual life. Forged in circumstances of tragedy and failure, modern ecumenism was at its core a movement of repentance and profound spiritual change, a common denominator that united all Christians then, and can still constitute a basis for ecumenical convergence today. Interestingly this was to be the vision of ecumenism which the Second Vatican Council identified and embraced in the 60s.

Another very important factor to consider when addressing the early post-war development of the ecumenical movement is the fact that the first General Assemblies of the newly built Council of Churches happened in the shadow of the Cold War, a rather concrete consequence and continuation of the previous World War which kept fresh in the minds of all Christians the horrors of war and the inheritance of the Holocaust. Indeed post-war maltreatment and atrocities in several communist countries equalled those of the war, and the constant abuse of basic human rights, up until the ninth decade of the twentieth century (and in a few instances up to this day), meant the world context remained a firmly troubled one. This further fostered the spirit of repentance and spiritual commitment that continued to fuel the ecumenical movement up until the end of the Cold War.

Looking back to the early ecumenical initiatives at the end of the nineteenth century with their eagerness to reach increasingly wider global consensus, unity and reconciliation it is now possible to discern an almost prophetic interpretation of ‘the times’ and a preparation for the calamitous beginning of the twentieth century, a zeal and commitment which was pressed, ‘rushed’ and cemented by two consecutive global wars and the associated unrest. The World Council of Churches was born in the very core of these problems and that was not without consequence. The fact that all ecumenical proceedings were unavoidably rushed by the circumstances of the time has also brought its own outcomes.

⁵⁵ See Note 34, this chapter.

The ecumenical fervour that started roughly at the end of the nineteenth century and developed in the first four decades of the twentieth century gave birth to the World Council of Churches, 'the most visible and central institutional expression of the ecumenical project',⁵⁶ 'the movement's most conspicuous fruit.'⁵⁷ Equating the ecumenical movement with the World Council of Churches has its risks, and is not entirely accurate, in absolute terms, but the fact remains that the early endeavours towards reunion, both from the Protestant and the Orthodox camp envisaged a 'League of Churches', an institutional platform that would gather all Churches together, facilitating a dialogue and exchange of as 'concrete' a nature as possible.

'Tangible achievements' of the WCC in the ecumenical sphere were, in fact, to be 'minimal' throughout the decades, in Jeremy Morris' opinion, who states that 'depending on your point of view, the creation of the WCC was either a triumph for the bureaucrats or a remarkable act of prophetic ecumenical witness'.⁵⁸ The author seems to lean towards the former as he goes on to say: 'The WCC soaked up time energy and money, and yet often seemed to puzzled local Churches little more than a grand talking shop'.⁵⁹ In those early days however the enthusiasm of bringing Churches together remained paramount despite emerging imperfections.

Circumstances have led to the creation of the Council without the time for sufficient preparatory dialogues and consultations, especially with regard to more complex issues like ecclesiology or the doctrinal understanding of the ecumenical fellowship or unity. Participants sought first to find – in the words of Aram I, Armenian Catholicos and prominent figure in today's ecumenical environment – 'a new identity, a new self-expression, a new orientation in a rapidly changing world, and then to consider what risks they may soon need to take for the sake of unity'.⁶⁰

Thus, the first General Assemblies and delegated Central Committees up until the 60s continued to explore the basis and constitution of the Council, while ecclesiological dialogues became increasingly inflexible. As basis for the fledgling ecumenical movement, a particular importance falls on the Toronto statement of 1950. Certain ecclesiological statements were introduced that later proved problematic for some of the members particularly from the Orthodox tradition, like the one below addressing the tension between the 'Church Universal' and the member Churches:

⁵⁶ Ingle-Gillis, *The Trinity and ecumenical Church thought*, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Morris, *The Church in the modern age*, p. 62.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Ingle-Gillis, *The Trinity and ecumenical Church thought*, p. 8.

The member churches recognize that the membership of the Church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own church body. They seek, therefore, to enter into living contact with those outside their own ranks who confess the Lordship of Christ.

All the Christian churches, including the Church of Rome, hold that there is no complete identity between the membership of the Church Universal and the membership of their own church. They recognize that there are church members “extra muros”, that these belong “aliquo modo” to the Church, or even that there is an “ecclesia extra ecclesiam”. This recognition finds expression in the fact that with very few exceptions the Christian churches accept the baptism administered by other churches as valid.⁶¹

The Central Committee came up with this sensitive and skilful formula of expressing the distinctness between the Churches and *the* one Church of Christ. The participants foresaw that, unless this point is clarified from the very beginning, the participation of the Catholic Church, or indeed the Orthodox Church, would be seriously compromised, as would be the whole ethos of the Council. The statement very commonsensically adds that even ‘the Church of Rome’ – and implicitly the Orthodox who helped draft the document, through their representative – does not claim *complete* identity between its membership and *the one* Church. The document diplomatically and wisely accepts this identification with the one Church as ‘legitimate’ up to a point, beyond which Churches would be prepared to acknowledge some form of Church activity outside its ‘walls’. The implication is that both the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox are prepared to accept this vision.

One problem though with such ecumenical statements is the somewhat unrealistic assumption that individuals, or groups of individuals taking part in official ecumenical encounters representing one particular Church would necessarily represent the views of that Church globally. Certainly this cannot be the case for the Orthodox Church which is a rather heterogeneous body, with theologians often expressing significantly divergent views, despite sharing a unitary doctrinal core. Their views do not trickle into the mainstream with the same ease as do the ideas of the Catholic theologians whose work found concrete realization and application in, for example, the Second Vatican Council. This is also due to the somewhat disjointed leadership, structure and infrastructure of the Orthodox Church which makes it hard for new statements, ideas or visions to seep through to the level of parishes and ordinary people, or even, in many cases, to the level of the diocese. And even if they were to reach those levels, their reception would hit a barrier of traditionalism and conservatism, that is often as much a cultural component as it is a religious one.

⁶¹ ‘The Toronto Statement’, The World Council of Churches website, accessed on 1 March 2012, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/toronto-1950/toronto-statement.html>

As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, its view of itself remains as *una sancta*, and, outside the sophisticated nuanced interpretations of its finest scholars, this view would be hard to challenge among its hierarchy and faithful. Nevertheless, in the case of both these Churches – Orthodox and Roman Catholic – the reception of the vision of a Church outside of their own Church proved later to be very hard to digest, since, for both, the view that they represent the one true Church has come to be equivalent to their perceived identity.

Also overly optimistic was the assumption that this recognition ('that the membership of the Church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own Church body') is manifest in the fact that 'churches accept the baptism administered by other churches as valid,' – 'with very few exceptions.'⁶² While there have been instances of the Orthodox Church receiving converts without baptism, this has never been general practice; re-baptism of all converts to Orthodoxy, including Catholic and Anglican, has remained a widely spread reality in Eastern Europe, Russia or Greece. Though the more 'open' Orthodox priests – the kind who were the first to rise to the ecumenical challenge – would not take the view that a new baptism was necessary, a majority of the clergy, and indeed their communities, would prefer the 'safer' route.

Following the same attempt to accommodate *una-sancta* ecclesiologies into the Council basis, the statement goes on to say that:

The member churches of the World Council consider the relationship of other churches to the Holy Catholic Church which the Creeds profess as a subject for mutual consideration. Nevertheless, membership does not imply that each church must regard the other member churches as churches in the true and full sense of the word.

There is a place in the World Council both for those churches which recognize other churches as churches in the full and true sense, and for those which do not. But these divided churches, even if they cannot yet accept each other as true and pure churches, believe that they should not remain in isolation from each other, and consequently they have associated themselves in the World Council of Churches.⁶³

The statement accepts that certain Churches may refuse to consider ecclesial or church-like formations outside their fold to be 'Churches' in the true sense of the word. Curiously this idea annuls to an extent the previous formula that Churches will refrain from identifying fully with the one Church. For indeed if they are entitled to reject outside denominations as 'Churches', then surely the only 'real' Church is within their own limits. This shrewd balancing act between the acceptance of the fact that the Church Universal is wider than one's own *ecclesia*, on the one hand, and the possibility

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

that whatever may be found outside a Church's own walls but still within the realm of *the one* Church of Christ, on the other hand, may in fact be something else than 'Church', represents a rather glaring contradiction. The premeditated ambiguity leaves room for certain Churches to go back and forth, from one interpretation to the other, according to necessity, and to finally justify possible blurring of perspectives through the over-arching and supremely flexible power of the Holy Spirit, or God's *oikonomia*, an oft-employed concept in the case of the Orthodox.

If this kind of inconsistent argument did work for a while and was certainly very useful in the early days of the ecumenical movement, such ambiguity ceased later to be constructive. For in fact neither the Orthodox nor the Roman Catholics ever ceased to think of themselves as the one true Church, nor yet could they find any formula or loophole in their ecclesiologies to allow them to think otherwise, despite the promises of *Unitatis Redintegratio* in the case of the Catholics. The Orthodox proceeded to engage in the ecumenical movement, as was shown in the previous chapter of this study, as the one true universal Church, in a candid attempt to convert all other Christians to Orthodoxy, not for the sake of jurisdictional legitimacy, but simply in a sincere endeavour to bring all people to embrace what they perceived to be Christ's whole truth.

The Toronto Statement did very importantly introduce the concept and possibility of a 'Church Universal' that is not identifiable with any current Church, but has wider limits. Had this retained a central position in the basis of the Council, interesting reflections, debates and developments might have ensued. But the fact that it was immediately and continually thereafter annulled by the notional possibility of 'non-Churches' within Christ's Church delayed a frank and decisive understanding of ecumenism by the Orthodox Church – and arguably the Roman Catholic Church as well – by a good few decades.

2.1.9. Roman-Catholic participation in the ecumenical movement

When Pope John XXIII announced in 1959 his intention to convene an Ecumenical Council for the Universal Church – a move that produced a degree of bewilderment in the Catholic world at the time – this came after a period in which Catholic hierarchy and scholarship had wrestled inconclusively with the notion of ecumenism. Like the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church had expressed repeatedly and in no uncertain terms its understanding of ecumenism as the return to the one true Church. This implied that unity of the Church could only be achieved through the conversion of all

other denominations to Catholicism. In his encyclical *Mortalium animos* of 1928, Pope Pius XI even expressed concern with regard to the developments of the then recent Faith and Order and Life and Work conferences, identifying the emerging movement as indifference or dilution of the historic Christian faith, as a deficient vision of the Church, and reaffirmed the Catholic position that 'dissidents' outside of the Roman Catholic Church can only realize the will of Christ by returning to Rome.⁶⁴ At the same time the encyclical centred around a concern and perceived necessity for Church unity and decried the state of fragmentation of the Church. A number of important Catholic personalities subsequently expressed the same concern, even placing it beyond and above ecclesiological or 'political' views.

The work of Abbé Paul Couturier, who established the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 1935, and that of Sister Maria Gabriella Sagheddu in the field of ecumenism, went in parallel to the ecumenical efforts of the Protestant and the Orthodox which led to the formation of the World Council of Churches. The approach of these two figures was of a more 'spiritual' nature, focusing on common prayer, as they set up an important foundation for an ecumenical vision of the Catholic Church. Indeed, Abbé Paul Couturier is sometimes referred to as 'the father of spiritual ecumenism' due to his enduring contribution to the concept of common prayer,⁶⁵ while Sister Maria Gabriella was later beatified by the Catholic Church and is venerated as 'Blessed Maria Gabriella of Unity', a 'patron' of ecumenism.⁶⁶

In the field of theology, an outstanding input came from Yves Congar, a French Dominican priest and theologian, whose thinking contributed profoundly to Catholic ecumenism – and to ecumenism in general –, before and after the Second Vatican Council. Congar's vision of ecumenism, informed by a pneumatological perspective, proposed a process of *metanoia* at the level of each individual member of parish:

Ecumenism is not a specialty. It presupposes a movement of conversion and reform co-extensive with the whole life of the community, the Church. It seemed to me also that each individual's ecumenical task lay in the first place in the home among his own people. Our business was to rotate the Catholic Church through a few degrees on its own axis in the direction of convergence towards others, and a possible unanimity with them, in accordance with a deeper and closer fidelity to our unique source, our common source.⁶⁷

64 See the Encyclical Letter of Pope PIUS XI. 'Mortalium Animos.' (The Minds of Mortals) 1928, accessed on 5 July 2012 at www.pamphlets.org.au/docs/cts/england/pdf/ctspe1928a.pdf

65 FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 131.

66 See Sister Maria Gabriella's biography online, accessed on 25 March 2012, <http://www.trappistevitorchiano.it/storia-beata-maria-gabriella-biografia.asp>

67 Yves Congar, *Dialogue between Christians* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1966), p. 21.

Congar's views on ecumenism and his openness made him unpopular with Church authorities in Rome, who refused on occasion to publish his studies, and even, at one point, introduced a censorship system whereby the Vatican was to vet and approve all his writings before publication.⁶⁸ Never renouncing his ecumenical vocation, Congar was eventually to be reinstated to become one of the main thinkers behind Vatican II, and is seen as one of the major theologians of the twentieth century.

Efforts of this nature had to an extent prepared the announcement in 1959 of the 'Ecumenical Council for the Universal Church', a project which Pope John XXIII proceeded to explicate that same year, through his encyclical *Ad Petri Cathedram*. This, according to the encyclical, was to be a council for Catholic bishops, to be witnessed by delegates of the other Churches. Not as mere spectators though, as, one year later, the Pope established the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity with the purpose of enabling 'those who bear the name Christian but are separated from the Apostolic See to follow the work of the Council and to find more easily the path by which they may arrive at the unity for which Christ prayed'.⁶⁹

The Council went on to become an epic event, spanning from October 1962 to December 1965, with hundreds of meetings of a formal character but also in the form of consultations that involved many theologians from many other denominations. Proceedings followed studies that were prepared in advance by commissions on major themes identified by Catholic leaders in preparation for the Council. The Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox participants (around 200 in number) were not mere observers but were involved in the proceedings of the Council in a genuinely brotherly spirit. They were consulted and asked to comment on documents, 'invited to speak to the bishops' and contributed significantly to the drafting of the *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio)*, 'one of the most decisive documents of the Vatican Council'.⁷⁰

The Decree on Ecumenism can indeed be seen as a charter informing all subsequent Catholic participation in ecumenical activities. The Decree addressed the tension between the *Una Sancta*, the boundaries of the Catholic Church and the other Churches in an imperative and articulate tone:

In subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions made their appearance and quite large communities came to be separated from full communion with the Catholic Church – for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame. [...] The differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church – whether in doctrine and

⁶⁸ FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 133.

⁶⁹ Quoted in FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 134.

⁷⁰ Jean-Marie Tillard quoted in FitzGerald, *The ecumenical movement*, p. 135.

sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church – do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. The ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles. But even in spite of them it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ's body, and have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church.⁷¹

Furthermore, the Decree goes on to say that 'some and even very many of the significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church.'⁷² Thus *Unitatis Redintegratio* clearly establishes that, although the Roman Catholic Church remains *de facto* the entity closest to the original universal Church, it does, however, acknowledge that 'elements' of the Church can exist outside the limits of the Catholic Church. It also acknowledges that both sides of the separation bore responsibility in the schism, implying that an effort for reunification must similarly come from both sides.

Reflecting the spirit of the Catholic ecumenical pioneers mentioned earlier in this chapter, the document also proposes that a spiritual *metanoia*, a 'change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name, "spiritual ecumenism"⁷³ – a paradigm of particular relevance to this study.

Although the Roman Catholic Church never became a member of the World Council of Churches, it began active collaboration with it through a Joint Working Group. Roman Catholic theologians became full members in the Commission on Faith and Order and Catholic observers started to participate in the Assemblies of the Council from 1968 onwards. It is fair to say that the Second Vatican Council and subsequent Catholic participation in the ecumenical movement – both inside and outside the WCC – marked a 'maturity' and 'wholeness' of the modern ecumenical movement, both by rounding it up into a truly global affair and adding a further step toward the reconciliation of all major Christian denominations. Also, perhaps more importantly, the Decree on Ecumenism brought genuine and renewed commitment, inspiration, and a new vision which has enriched the ecumenical spirit and will continue to do so in the future.

71 'Decree on Ecumenism. *Unitatis Redintegratio*', accessed on 30 March 2012, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

2.1.10. *The Special Commission on Orthodox Participation within the WCC*

Orthodox discomfort vis-à-vis ecumenical participation has permeated the dealings of the WCC throughout the decades so consistently and deeply, that it has come to be seen, as the official WCC website admits, as almost a defining feature of the ecumenical movement: 'Since the twentieth century, a remarkably consistent feature of the modern ecumenical movement has been the presence but also the unease of the Orthodox Churches.'⁷⁴ 'At nearly every meeting of global significance until the early 1990s', the Council's website continues, 'the Orthodox felt compelled to issue separate statements, indicating serious reservations, doctrinal and otherwise. For a variety of reasons, Orthodox dissatisfaction with aspects of the WCC, and intra-Orthodox tensions concerning membership in a global fellowship of churches, came to a crisis point in the late 1990s, just before the WCC's eighth assembly in Harare in December 1998.'⁷⁵ Signs of a crisis however had appeared earlier at the previous assembly of 1991 in Canberra. Mary Tanner, the distinguished and renowned Anglican ecumenical scholar, linked the beginning of the tensions to events in Canberra which led up to the establishment of the Special Commission. This was in part down to Korean scholar Chung Hyun Kyung's presentation on the Assembly theme ('Come, Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation') and the accompanying ritual which caused a furore at the meeting.⁷⁶ Dr Chung's presentation was perceived as 'crossing the line between enculturation and syncretism' and was deemed 'a powerful cocktail of feminist and Korean motives.'⁷⁷

As Tanner suggests, since this followed a very traditional Orthodox service led by Patriarch Parthenios of Alexandria and All Africa, the Orthodox participants' shock and concern were made even more acute, and this was expressed immediately by means of a statement at the end of the Assembly: 'We perceive a growing danger of departure from a biblically based Christian understanding of the Trinitarian God... We

⁷⁴ Under the section 'Why a Special Commission?', on the 'Frequently Asked Questions' website of the World Council of Churches, accessed on 1 May 2012, <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/special-faqs-e.html>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ 'Accompanied by a troupe of dancers with gongs, drums, and banners, and by Australian aborigines in paint and loin cloths, [Hyun Kyung] invoked ancestor spirits and indicated that the best "image of the Holy Spirit comes from the image of *Kwan In* [who] is venerated as Goddess of compassion and wisdom in East Asian women's popular religion.'" Lawrence E. Adams, 'The WCC at Canberra: which spirit?', in *First Things* (June 1991 issue).

Accessed on 1 May 2013 at <http://www.firstthings.com/article/1991/06/005-the-wcc-at-canberra-which-spirit>.

⁷⁷ Dr Mary Tanner, 'The Work of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation', published online by The Society for Ecumenical Studies, accessed on 2 April 2010, <http://sfes.faithweb.com/0211tannerwcc&orthodoxy.pdf>, p. 5.

must therefore ask ourselves: has the time come for the Orthodox Churches and other member churches to review their relations with the World Council?'⁷⁸

To further address what the Orthodox perceived to be a serious challenge to the ethos and theology of the Council, they summoned a meeting of representatives of Eastern and Oriental Churches in Chambésy, Switzerland, to reflect on Orthodox relations with the WCC. This was the beginning of a reflective process for the Orthodox constituency, encouraged by and, to a degree, circumscribed within the self-evaluation and revision process initiated by WCC in preparation for the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary, known as Common Understanding and Vision (CUV). This reflection was further driven by tensions that were beginning to mount within several of the local Orthodox Churches, and eventually resulted in the withdrawal from the Council of the Churches of Bulgaria and Georgia, while the Russian Orthodox Church also began to voice their dissatisfaction and hinted at the possibility of withdrawal.⁷⁹

All these tensions and concerns eventually became manifest seven years later, shortly before the Harare General Assembly, through the Thessaloniki Statement issued in 1998 by 'delegates of all the Canonical Orthodox Churches.'⁸⁰ While the Thessaloniki Statement does reaffirm Orthodox commitment to ecumenism, it simultaneously raises serious concerns regarding the WCC ethos, working methodology and structure which were all considered to be in need of 'radical restructuring'.⁸¹ The Thessaloniki Statement was the first appeal calling for a mixed theological commission – with members from both the Orthodox and non-Orthodox world – which would address the concerns and reservations of the Orthodox, with a view to making their participation in the life of the Council more tolerable and constructive. The statement was prepared in view of the forthcoming WCC Harare Assembly, during which the Orthodox were determined not only to articulate their concerns and dissatisfactions, but also to bring concrete proposals to the meeting. Indeed, as suggested in the Thessaloniki Statement, the Harare Assembly did create a 'mixed Commission', deemed the 'Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC' which was to systematically address all the concerns voiced by the Orthodox.

⁷⁸ Cited in Tanner, 'The Work of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation', p. 5.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ 'The Thessaloniki Statement', on WCC website, accessed on 10 May 2012, <http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/ecumenical-movement-in-the-21st-century/member-churches/special-commission-on-participation-of-Orthodox-churches/first-plenary-meeting-documents-december-1999/thessaloniki-statement.html>

⁸¹ Ibid.

This type of Commission was novel in the history of the Council as it comprised for the first time 'an equal number of representatives appointed by Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, and representatives from the other Churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC appointed by the Central Committee.'⁸² The Commission worked for three years through plenary meetings and sub-committee meetings, work deemed 'remarkable' for the 'ethos, the quality of listening to each other and the attempts to hear what the other was saying.'⁸³ In their final report, the Special Commission identified five major areas which required reform: ecclesiology, social and ethical issues, common prayer, decision-making and membership.⁸⁴ This report was received by the Central Committee in 2002 and immediately recommended a series of actions. In subsequent years the Central Committee took concrete actions on decision-making and membership matters, and the newly approved methodologies were applied at the General Assembly in Porto Alegre, 2006.

This chapter's brief historical survey has thus followed the development of the ecumenical movement and its gradual crystallisation into a global phenomenon, attracting more and more participants and slowly reaching a more mature theological self-understanding, but at the same time reaching what now appears to be a period of weariness and disillusionment, an impasse which makes further ecumenical progress difficult. This exploration has also revealed a mounting Orthodox discomfort throughout the decades and an ecclesiological incompatibility with the ecumenical platform which has made Orthodox participation in ecumenical activities increasingly hard. This study will now address, in the second part of this chapter, the interaction between ecumenism and theology, exploring a number of visions of ecumenism and how they can inform the way the Orthodox relate to the ecumenical movement.

⁸² 'Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC', on WCC website, accessed on 8 May 2012, <http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wccassembly/documents/english/pb-03-specialcommission.pdf>

⁸³ Tanner, 'The Work of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation', p. 6.

⁸⁴ See the 'Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC'.

2.2. Ecumenism and theology

From an etymological point of view, the Greek word *oikoumene* literally means ‘the (whole) inhabited world.’⁸⁵ It is in this sense that it appears in the New Testament, as for instance in Matthew 24:14: ‘And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world (*oikoumene*) as a testimony to all nations.’ It is also employed to signify, in the same biblical context, the unity of the Roman Empire (Luke 2:1), the kingdoms of the earth (Luke 4:5), and the world destined to be redeemed by Christ (Hebrews 2:5).⁸⁶ The term remained in use in subsequent early centuries to indicate those ‘Church councils (e.g., Nicaea, Chalcedon) whose decisions represented the universal Church, in contrast to other councils that enjoyed only regional or limited reception.’⁸⁷

2.2.1. Ecumenism as quest for unity

In its modern understanding ecumenism is invariably linked to the idea of Church unity. Rather than referring to an existing reality or context it now refers to the ideal reality of the ‘one Church’, as it existed in the first centuries and which has become, throughout the centuries, increasingly marred by a plurality of divisions, preventing the inhabitants of the former *oikoumene* from witnessing and interacting with each other in full communion. The theological impetus driving ecumenical endeavours has most often been identified in the passage from John 17:20-21, rendering Jesus’ words: ‘I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, *that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me*’⁸⁸

According to the *Dictionary of Ecumenical Movement*, ‘at its best, the ecumenical movement has been a search for unity in the truth as it is found in Jesus (Eph. 4:21), and into which the Holy Spirit leads (John 16:13).’⁸⁹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines ecumenism as ‘the movement or tendency toward worldwide Christian unity or cooperation’, the term emphasizing ‘what is viewed as the universality of the Christian Churches’.⁹⁰ For the Orthodox scholar Georges Florovsky, ecumenism addresses ‘the problem of schism and its healing. Christendom is utterly divided and polarized. There

⁸⁵ Christopher J Ellis, *Together on the way, A theology of ecumenism* (London: The British Council of Churches, 1990), p. 7.

⁸⁶ From the entry on ‘Christianity’ in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed on 12 August 2012, <http://m.eb.com/topic/115240/Christianity#67623.toc>.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ My italics.

⁸⁹ Nicholas Lossky et al, ed., *Dictionary of ecumenical movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, London: Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, 1991, Introduction), p. 5.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

is no common mind in the Christian world. The first ecumenical task is namely that of creating it.’⁹¹ In the words of the prominent Protestant ecumenist, Phillip Potter, ecumenism is also ‘the means by which the churches that form ... the house, the *oikos* of God, are seeking so to live and witness before all peoples that the whole *oikoumene* may become the *oikos* of God through the crucified and risen Christ in the power of the life-giving Spirit.’⁹²

In the above explanations, the unity/union of the Church is presented as the primary and ultimate goal of ecumenism. As mentioned above, Christ’s command that ‘all be one’ establishes unity as an essential calling and vocation of the Church. The unity of the Church is seen as a factor of utmost and crucial importance for the fate of humankind, as, without it, the world ‘would not believe.’ Moreover, from an ontological point of view, Christ is the Great Unifier, gathering and reconciling all people and all things unto himself: ‘For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him *to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*’ (Colossians, 1:19-20). Schisms and divisions in the Church of Christ appear thus as fundamental contradictions and ‘betrayals’ of the very core and nature of the Church.⁹³ Endeavouring to right this warped reality within the Church appears to be a fundamental duty of all Christians. While this vocation towards unity is seen as paramount in all traditions, there are, however, differing views both as to what ‘Church’ and ‘unity’ mean, as this study will show later on.

It should also be noted that this approach driven by Christ’s injunction cannot channel the quest for Church unity around a purely Christological core alone. The passage also gives a hint of the model and structure of the sought unity: ‘*as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us*’. This has constituted the main foundation of Trinitarian interpretations of ecumenism. If the Triune God Himself is a mutual indwelling, a ‘unity’ of different persons, this brings the divine model closer to the human societal level but also justifies, it can be argued, on a theological level, the tension encountered in the ecumenical endeavour between unity and diversity. The usefulness of this perspective has been reflected in the paradigm shift to which the

91 Georges Florovsky, *Ecumenism I. A doctrinal approach* (Volume Thirteen in the Collected works of Georges Florovsky; Vaduz: Buchervertriebsanstalt, 1989), p. 22.

92 In David Gill, ed., *Gathered for life: Official report, VI Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1983), p. 197.

93 In the words of Romanian Orthodox ecumenist Ion Bria: ‘To remain complacent about the historic divisions among the churches means to undermine the mission of the church.’ In *The Liturgy after the Liturgy* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), p. viii.

Protestant ecumenical theologian Konrad Raiser referred, from the idea of the lordship of Christ over the world and the church, to an idea of God as a social being.⁹⁴

This study will return to the theme of unity in its fourth chapter, when the theme of 'the unity we seek' will be dealt with in conjunction with the attempt to identify new perception paradigms for Orthodoxy and ecumenism. Although the language of 'unity in diversity' has been used more and more in ecumenical circles in the past decades, a satisfactory understanding that would work both for the Protestant and the Orthodox Churches has not yet been reached. Protestant Churches have fundamentally seen the various Churches already in an invisible unity in Christ, a unity which the ecumenical movement is to ratify and organize. For the Orthodox, division is very real and they have veered away from the theme of an existing, to a degree, invisible unity, as it threatens their own vision of unity as something that can happen only within the perimeter of the one Orthodox Church.

2.2.2. *Ecumenism as a spiritual state*

Further pushing the calling for Church unity even deeper into the realm of spiritual and theological parameters is the fact that Jesus *prayed* for this unity. Thus it could be argued that ecumenism ultimately began at a spiritual level, through prayer, and can only be maintained, as taught by Christ Himself, through the same communion in love that exists between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is not perhaps a great surprise that this aspect is greatly favoured by Orthodox theologians, who are very keen on terms such as *koinonia*, a term promoted into ecumenical circles by the Orthodox, which attempts to encompass a threefold significance: the *communion* of the life within the Church; the *participation* in the life of God; and of *love* as life in God⁹⁵ – or 'spiritual ecumenism'.

The Orthodox theologian Dumitru Staniloae wrote that ecumenism is 'a state, a reality in which the Holy Spirit urges the Churches to love each other, as their separation was not only an open conflict but also a lack of love.'⁹⁶ In the words of Romanian Patriarch Daniel, participation in the ecumenical movement, could be seen as 'an endeavour in the spirit of love, humility and service to be more involved [...] in a project which is greater than any institutional or confessional interest – a project that we cannot control

⁹⁴ See Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in transition: a paradigm shift in the ecumenical movement?* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), pp. 95-96.

⁹⁵ Nicholas Sagovsky, *Ecumenism, Christian origins and the practice of communion* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Ciobotea, *Confessing the Truth*, p. 244.

or influence positively by worldly means, but only by the confession and practice of the true faith inseparable from love.’⁹⁷

2.2.3. *Ecumenism as theology and action*

There is another crucial aspect that emerges from some other definitions of ecumenism. With commendable meticulousness, the unidentified contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, whose brief definition of ecumenism was quoted above, returns to the concept for the main article on ‘Christianity’ and gives an uncommonly succinct and comprehensive definition:

‘Ecumenism is a vision, a movement, a theology, and a mode of action. It represents the universality of the people of God and affects the way Christians think about their faith, the church, and the world. Ecumenism is a long process that draws Christians together, uniting their life and mission and bringing the Body of Christ and the human community closer to the fulfilment of God’s purposes. [...] Far more than a programme or an organization, ecumenism is, according to the British ecumenist Oliver S. Tomkins, “something that happens to the soul of Christians”.’⁹⁸

Another description following the same lines belongs to the famous Protestant scholar Thomas F. Torrance: ‘Ecumenism refers to the dynamic concern for the unity and renewal of the Church and of all things in Jesus Christ, which has emerged as the most distinctive feature of twentieth-century Christianity.’⁹⁹ Ecumenism is also, according to the authors of an *Introduction to ecumenism* published by the Catholic Paulist Press, ‘a complex reality, a reform and renewal movement within the Churches that is rooted in a search for a common mission, is nurtured by a common spirituality, is lived in common service, and is developed in the variety of cultural contexts in which the Church of Christ finds itself incarnated.’¹⁰⁰

Hailing also from the Roman-Catholic camp, British theologian Paul D. Murray’s vision of ecumenism is reflected in what has now become a fully-fledged ongoing ecumenical project based on the twin notions of *Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning*. His vision is grounded on the conviction that Christians are to become ‘more fully, more richly, what we already are; what we have been called to be and are destined to be and in which we already share, albeit in part.’¹⁰¹ Ecumenical participants

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ From the entry on ‘Christianity’ in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed on 12 August 2012, <http://m.eb.com/topic/115240/Christianity#67623.toc>.

⁹⁹ Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in reconciliation. Essays towards Evangelical and Catholic unity in east and west* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), p. 15.

¹⁰⁰ Jeffrey Gros, Eamon McManus and Ann Riggs, *Introduction to ecumenism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), p. 3.

¹⁰¹ Paul D. Murray, ‘Receptive ecumenism and Catholic learning – establishing the agenda’. In *Receptive ecumenism and the call to Catholic learning. Exploring a way for contemporary ecumenism*, Paul D. Murray (ed.), pp. 5-26 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 6.

are drawn, in Murray's view, into 'a process of growth and change—a process of conversion—that is at root not a loss, nor a diminishment but a finding, a freeing, an intensification, and an enrichment.'¹⁰² Murray speaks of a 'transformational receptivity' which implies a constant spirit of openness to learn and receive from others, precisely with a view to becoming gradually and constantly transformed, ever-closer to the plenitude of the life in Christ.¹⁰³

Thus, in the above positions, ecumenism is a 'movement' a 'mode of action', a 'process', a 'dynamic concern', a 'renewal', a 'reform', a 'process of transformation'. Such key terms reveal an understanding of ecumenism as a dynamic, active enterprise, a renewal/*metanoia*-centred activity. This angle presents a particular importance – in general, but for this study, in particular – for several reasons. It maintains ecumenism in the practical, participatory sphere of personal active involvement. Ecumenism is not a sought-after reality, nor is it merely a philosophy, or a concept; nor is it indeed, as pointed out in the definition above, a 'program' or an 'organization', some impersonal theory, but something that 'happens to the soul of Christians.'¹⁰⁴ This language of spiritual participation is one which the Orthodox love and understand well, and which has offered, and can offer still, a useful platform for reflection on the participation of the Orthodox in ecumenical processes.

Moreover, and very importantly, ecumenism is seen by Gillian Evans as a *theology* which 'has both to look towards and maintain unity and to counter division',¹⁰⁵ and which has as its goal, as George Hunsinger put it, the 'promotion of visible unity as a theological task.'¹⁰⁶ First of all, this means that ecumenical participants cannot approach the ecumenical endeavour outside of theology, as a solely social, humanitarian or rapprochement action. Ecumenism is first and foremost a theological activity and cannot be a 'secular' one. Also, of even greater relevance to this study is the implication that, as was said earlier with reference to Orthodoxy, ecumenism, in its permanent association with theology, is a 'journey', an ongoing process. As a process, it is not a transitory or 'circumstantial' necessity of the times, but a constant aspect of theology, if its goal is indeed to 'maintain unity' and to 'counter division.'

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ See Murray, 'Receptive ecumenism and Catholic learning', p. 14.

¹⁰⁴ Oliver S. Tomkins quoted in the entry on 'Christianity' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

¹⁰⁵ G. R. Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology: the lessons so far* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 19.

¹⁰⁶ George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and ecumenism. Let us keep the feast* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 7.

2.2.4. *Ecumenism as return to the One Church*

Mention should be made at this point of an underlying perspective on ecumenism which has informed the participation of both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches in ecumenical environments. Both these Churches see the 'one Church' as coincidental with their own Church and believe that the unity of the Church of Christ has subsisted within their own ecclesial boundaries. They also see each other as 'schismatics' or as having departed from the true Church. The idea that each of these Churches has maintained the unbroken unity of the Church leads to very interesting and paradoxical views on Church unity. The theological tension in these traditions vis-à-vis ecumenism and inter-Christian dialogue revolves around the question as to how tightly the limits of Orthodoxy/Catholicity apply around what they perceive to be the ecclesiastical boundaries of their own Churches.

From an Orthodox viewpoint, which is rather similar to the Catholic one, ecumenism, as the reunion of all Christians into the *one true Church*, is ultimately seen as a 'mission' of the Orthodox Church to *convert*, no less, all various denominations to Orthodoxy,¹⁰⁷ a mission 'stemming naturally and inescapably from [the Orthodox'] truly awesome claim that [they] are Orthodox and that [theirs] is the true Church.'¹⁰⁸

Also in the words of the prominent Catholic scholar Yves Congar (in one of his earlier writings):

Apart from the embodiment of unity there might be 'ecumenism', but not true catholicity. For catholicity is the taking of the many into an already existing oneness. ... Without that unity we cannot indeed talk about Catholicity, for that is the universal capacity of unity, but at best of 'ecumenism' which is, inversely, the capacity for uniting latent in the diversity of Christian groups ... In other words, there may be, and there is, a non-Roman 'ecumenism' - there can indeed be no other. But there cannot be a 'non-Roman Catholicity.'¹⁰⁹

Ecumenism cannot be identified with the unity of the one Catholic Church and it remains merely a 'capacity' which remains 'latent' outside Roman Catholicity. Congar was cautious to draw a distinction between the two terms lest there should be any confusion or overlapping between them. Here catholicity not only represents unity, its very object is to seek unity and gather everything unto itself. This language was revised later on, during and after the works of the Vatican II Council, when catholicity

¹⁰⁷ As mentioned earlier, Schmemmann prefers the term 'missionary' to the term 'ecumenical' when he thus describes one of the major tasks of Orthodox theology. See Alexander Schmemmann, *Church, world, mission. Reflections on Orthodoxy in the west* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979), p. 123.

¹⁰⁸ Schmemmann, *Church, world, mission*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁹ M.J. Congar, *Divided Christendom. A Catholic study of the problem of reunion* (London: The Centenary Press, 1939), p. 101.

was said to be, not the prerogative of the Roman Church, but rather 'subsisting' within it.¹¹⁰

Insofar as the Orthodox are concerned, since the reunion of Christians must ultimately mean re-joining the one true Orthodox Church, the purpose of Orthodox participation in ecumenical meetings can only be to try and draw the other denominations back to Orthodoxy. As we have seen, Orthodox theologians often defer to the rather strong language of 'conversion'. Yet, they hasten to add, this conversion should not be seen as submission to some centre of influence:

Because they believe their Church to be the true Church, the Orthodox can have but one ultimate desire: the *conversion* or reconciliation of all Christians to Orthodoxy. Yet it must not be thought that Orthodox demand the submission of other Christians to a particular centre of power and jurisdiction. The Orthodox Church is a family of sister Churches, decentralised in structure, which means that separated communities can be integrated into Orthodoxy without forfeiting their autonomy: Orthodoxy desires their reconciliation not their absorption.¹¹¹

It is pointless to initiate any exploration of Orthodoxy and ecumenism without acknowledging from the outset the position and understanding held by the Orthodox both of their own ecclesial standing and of the ecumenical endeavour. While this interpretation appears as a fundamental obstruction in the ecumenical undertaking – to the extent that it makes both Orthodox and non-Orthodox wonder what room for movement remains for the Orthodox within those parameters – it does lend itself to a deeper, more nuanced analysis. This position, central to our overall discussion, will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

In conclusion, a number of key points may be derived from this exploration of Orthodox participation within ecumenical contexts:

Ecumenism is a calling to all theology and an ongoing process. It is an integral part of genuine theology, and no theology is genuine without it. To focus on the ecumenical dimension of theology means nothing other than to rediscover its plenary vocation. As this study will show in its next section, theology has always been ecumenical inasmuch as it has always strived to maintain unity and to vigorously oppose division. Similarly it is entirely unlikely that this imperative would ever cease to be relevant. Perfect and ideal unity is so unattainable that divisions must always remain on the agenda. Ecumenism and theology appear thus to be inextricably and timelessly connected.

¹¹⁰ See *Lumen Gentium*, accessed on 1 September 2012, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

¹¹¹ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 317.

Following from the above, it is unrealistic to expect a quick resolution to the painful problem of many centuries of schism and division. And indeed, were these divisions to one day be overcome and unity achieved, ecumenism would still, necessarily, remain an integral part of theology, an essential means to counter the tendency towards division which will remain a constant in a world which has always been, and will increasingly be, characterized by diversity. This premise is important particularly in addressing what is referred to more and more these days as a 'crisis' or 'impasse' of ecumenism, and the anticlimactic vision that the future of ecumenism is bleak. Conversely, today's situation may be seen rather more optimistically as but one of the many trials along an audacious journey.

Ecumenism is a participatory endeavour in a deeply theological sense. This means that ecumenical participation does not occur on the societal, political or diplomatic/'resolution' level, but on the level of deep personal participation. It is a commitment of a spiritual nature, synonymous ultimately with faith. Ecumenism is a *dynamic* reality, involving an effort of faith on the part of the participants, and can never be a given. To be ecumenical is primarily a matter of faith. When participants approach one another in order to embark upon an ecumenical conversation they ultimately do so in a spirit of faith and communion.¹¹²

Ecumenism requires a pre-methodological approach. Since ecumenism is about 'doing', about 'action', the question of 'how' to do ecumenism would appear to be fundamental. This explains the many attempts made by scholars to formulate ecumenical methodologies that would endeavour to make possible meaningful ecumenical interactions. The slight danger of ecumenical methodologies is that they frequently end up seeking fast solutions and making immediate proposals that aim to speedily decongest the status quo of separation. When identifying categories, rules and resolutions it comes as a natural drive to wish to see their mechanics put to work. When methodologies are understood as only part of the process and as tools enabling our participation and steps along an audacious journey, the risk diminishes. This study therefore proposes a reflection on a 'pre-methodology' of ecumenism which ensures not only that it continues to operate in the 'right' spirit but which would also resist any rushed attempts to reach solutions, the sort of which affected the ecumenical endeavour adversely in its first decades.

112 See 'Towards a Protestant-Orthodox Dialogue within the WCC, Minutes from a Central Committee "Padare" session', 27 August 1999, accessed on 1 October 2012, <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/morges-13-e.html>.

This study will now look in more detail at each of these three essential points related to the nature of ecumenism.

2.2.5. *Ecumenism as permanent calling to all theology and ongoing process*

‘Ecumenical theology has both to look towards and maintain unity; and to counter division’, writes the Anglican academic Gillian Evans. But she immediately goes on to suggest something very interesting: ‘It has in these respects the traditional responsibilities of the theological exercises of earlier ages, when these ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ aspects of the theologian’s task were already clear.’¹¹³ The important implication of this statement is that theology, in its constant drive to foster unity and to fight against separations, has been ecumenical since the early centuries of the Church, a drive which permeated Patristic thought and writings and which was the compelling ideology behind the Ecumenical Councils of the first centuries. The novelty brought by ‘modern’ ecumenism, in Evans’ view, is its task ‘to make what appear to be parallel lines meet. It has to make theology done in confessional and ecclesial separation a common theological exercise.’¹¹⁴

This is indeed an interesting starting point from which to approach modern-day ecumenism, not only because it sets the term within a continuing historical timeline, but more importantly because it points to ecumenism as a constant and implicit characteristic of theology, something that is, as the Orthodox would understand it, part of the ‘living’ tradition of the Church. Moreover, it is implied that ecumenism always needs to be one of the active tasks of theology. A quote from Yves Congar wonderfully states that ‘to discover what unites us is the permanent task of theology.’¹¹⁵ What is new today, in Evans’ view, is ‘the conscious recognition of this ‘permanence’ of the universality of ecumenical theology in terms such as these; and indeed the very framing of theology as an ecumenical task.’¹¹⁶

This shifts the perspective from the unity which once existed, or which ‘will happen’ some time in the future to the unity that ‘is happening’ now and always. Today’s ecumenism, however, introduces particular nuances to this constant drive towards unity. The ecumenical endeavour now has to deal with parallel routes and needs to transform theology into a ‘common exercise’ in a diverse and pluralist context. But does this type of theology even exist yet? The ecumenical pioneer Visser T’Hooft

¹¹³ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p 19.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Congar, *Dialogue between Christians*, p. 21.

¹¹⁶ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 20.

quoted long ago an even earlier statement (1932) made by a legend of contemporary theology – Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

‘There is as yet no theology of the ecumenical movement. Each time when the Church of Christ in history has arrived at a new understanding of its own nature, it has produced a theology which expresses that understanding adequately. If the ecumenical movement is based on a new understanding of the Church of Christ it will produce a theology. If it does not succeed in doing so, this will mean that it is nothing else than a purely utilitarian organisation.’¹¹⁷

Besides pointing to the danger of turning ecumenism into a ‘utilitarian organisation’ should the theological component be neglected, Bonhoeffer also anticipated the necessity for a new theology that would express the Church’s ‘new understanding of its own nature’. And this is indeed what should be expected of ecumenical theology: not the introduction of something fundamentally new, a new theological language, but of a new set of parameters and a new grammar that would enable theologians to understand the nature of the Church afresh.

The theological nature of ecumenism or, rather, the ecumenical drive of theology is of essential importance in an ecumenical conversation with the Orthodox. The quest for Church unity is not a marginal issue in the Orthodox tradition and is mentioned centrally in what is perceived to be the very core of Church Life – the Eucharistic Liturgy. Thus the congregation chants: ‘For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy Churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.’¹¹⁸ The call to unity around the Eucharist is addressed to the entirety of humankind, to the entire cosmos and creation and constitutes the call of all theology. It can therefore be said that all theology is ecumenical. To focus on the ecumenical dimension of theology means nothing other than to rediscover its plenary vocation. An Orthodox position emphasizing this viewpoint was expressed by the Romanian theologian Ioan Sauca:

[...]To be concerned about and committed to the realization of Christian unity as response to the prayer of Christ before His passions ‘that all may be one’ (John 17) and out of a feeling of guilt vis-à-vis the sin of division, is not a matter of choice and does not belong solely to an elite or to special people. Such a concern and commitment belong to the Orthodox identity. He who will stop praying for the ‘unity of all’ is denying his own Orthodox identity.¹¹⁹

However where is the *locum* that such new theological discourse can be developed and formulated? If it is to be the current context of separated Christian denominations – not just a diverse reality, but a clear status of division – will a coherent converging

117 Quoted in W. A. Visser T’ Hooft, *The pressure of our common calling* (London: SCM Press, 1959), p. 13.

118 Ephrem Lash (trans.), *The Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 3.

119 Ioan Sauca, ‘The Church beyond our boundaries. The ecumenical vocation of Orthodoxy’, in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 56 No. 2, April 2004, p. 224.

theology be possible? Where would such a theology be grounded? Orthodox scholar and ecumenical pioneer, Georges Florovsky, quoted by Evans, believed that an understanding of the ecumenical process is only possible insofar as it focuses its analysis on 'the principles and methodologies of a particular Christian Church.'¹²⁰ Yves Congar also wrote of three stages of ecumenism, the first of which, revealingly, involved 'explaining the faith to others'.¹²¹ It is not surprising that two major theologians belonging to traditions which identify the oneness of the Church with their own *ecclesia* choose this starting point, since 'explaining the faith' to others could very well be understood as imparting to the others the one fullness of truth. Their view is by no means exceptional. Protestant theologian George Hunsinger joins them in this approach. Postulating that 'there is no such thing as a view from nowhere', he goes on to observe:

'...ecumenical theology cannot be 'ecumenical' in general, but will always be grounded in a particular tradition. It must think from a centre in that tradition outward to an ecumenical circumference, and back again. On the divisive questions, it must weigh its own tradition in light of other traditions, and other traditions in light of its own. It must seek to preserve what is best and avoid what is worst while daring to be open to what is new. The most urgent and overriding goal, however, is not self-preservation but reunion.'¹²²

The model proposed by Hunsinger for the ecumenical enterprise as a constant ricocheting between the core of one particular tradition and the surrounding sphere of Christian traditions is particularly enlightening and constructive. If divisions are to be dealt with through a constant 'weighing' of one's tradition in reference to other traditions, this ought not be done as a means of seeking the justification or preservation of one own's background, much less pitting one tradition against another. The underlying driving energy must always be the search for unity. This vision responds to the impracticality of having a 'view from nowhere.' What if, however, the ultimate ecumenical reality were ever to become a *locum*, an actual united forum of Christians? Would that lead to a more plenary ecumenism?

Florovsky seemed to believe so, as he wrote that currently 'there cannot be an ecumenical theology, there can only be theologies of ecumenism.'¹²³ Gillian Evans notes that for Florovsky there was not yet an 'ecumenical theology', for such a theology would have to be elaborated jointly by representatives from several Churches.¹²⁴ A similar idea is encountered in Yves Congar who, following on from the first stage

¹²⁰ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 20.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and ecumenism*, p. 9.

¹²³ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p 20.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

towards unity mentioned above ('explaining the faith to others'), he proposed two more: the second stage of wishing 'to learn from others', and the third of wishing 'to learn with others'.¹²⁵ The third ultimate and 'complete' stage can only occur in togetherness, with the implication that the first two stages are preparatory.

Thus Evans proposes the notion of a 'pre-ecumenical' theology as an 'obvious place to begin' the ecumenical process.¹²⁶ She is in distinguished company: Yves Congar referred to his earlier writings on ecumenism collected in *Dialogue between Christians*, as 'pre- or para-ecumenical'.¹²⁷ 'There exists', echoes the Protestant academic Elwyn A. Smith, 'a kind of "pre-ecumenical" dialogue whose character is derived from and dominated by the full ecumenism towards which it looks.'¹²⁸ Thus, for all these authors, present-day ecumenism is merely an 'introductory' exercise, establishing a method and a direction with a view that Christians will be able, one day, to speak the plenary ecumenical language – only with one common voice.

There is a tension here – a contradiction even – between the understanding of ecumenism as an implicit permanence, on the one hand, and a reality that can only be reached with the achievement of unity, on the other. Theoretically, if one speaks of ecumenism as, in a sense, its own goal, with all contemporary ecumenical endeavours simply paving the way for its accomplishment, the understanding of ecumenism as a permanent concern of theology is to an extent annulled. One cannot, however, circumvent the reality that, while we are accustomed to ecumenism taking place in a context of diversity and variety – what may be identified as a permanent attribute of the Church, from its origins and especially into the future – ecumenism would acquire a new structure and ethos were it to find itself in a context where separations will have been largely overcome. It is indeed one thing to do ecumenism in diversity and another thing to do ecumenism in divergence.

Is then the polarity 'pre-ecumenism' – 'ecumenism' useful to ecumenical theological reflection? This study proposes that, while this view does signal an important perspective on the inner nature of ecumenism and its expected development, it is not at this stage useful to employ these categories for contemporary theological discourse. This study would propose, instead, a partial overlapping of the terms, that ecumenism *is*, to a great extent, pre-ecumenism, in that it searches, precedes and anticipates an ecumenical plenitude. As this plenitude is to be sought constantly in its utmost

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Quoted in Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p 20.

¹²⁸ Elwyn A. Smith, 'Editorial', in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 4 (1967), p. 303.

perfection, ecumenism will be ever active, as a pre-condition to keeping the Body of Christ as one.

There are benefits emerging from this paradigm, as there are risks. The obvious danger is that, if ecumenism comes to be perceived as an abstract process with a goal not clearly defined and an even less clear target in time, ecumenically-minded Christians might lose interest, momentum and enthusiasm, while coming to maintain ecumenism in the lofty sphere of theoretical theologising, without seeking to achieve anything of a pragmatic nature. The advantage would be that there would be less talk of 'crises', fewer unrealistic 'immediate' expectations, less disappointment, and fewer hasty attempts to solve the ecumenical puzzle within mere decades or even years.

In the case of Orthodox participation, it would release the phobic tension of having to keep apace with rapidly changing and evolving contexts which seem to threaten the Orthodox centuries-old living inheritance, the Tradition of the Church. The idea, also, of ecumenism as an ongoing theological process, an endeavour circumscribed in the very continuing Tradition of the Church would give the Orthodox more confidence and impetus in pursuing the ecumenical enterprise. Deep in the Orthodox theological tradition, although not immediately noticeable when consulting many contemporary Orthodox authors, lies the belief that theology is not theory but praxis, that is, active involvement, participation, commitment. Ecumenical theology and ecumenical 'movement' would therefore ultimately mean the same thing.

It is not, however, without a degree of irritation that Evans observed a tendency among the Orthodox of trying 'to embrace the whole of theology, Christology, Pneumatology, Mysteriology, and all that relates to them'¹²⁹ which ultimately 'results in a confusion of themes and ideas, and too much identification . . . on the pattern of Christ is the Spirit, the Spirit is Christ, Christ is the Church, the Church is the Eucharist'.¹³⁰ If other dialogues tackle one problem at a time, the Orthodox insist on keeping a holistic vision which slows down proceedings and makes the organisation of the dialogue a 'nightmare'.¹³¹ Evans acknowledges that both approaches have drawbacks. If the Orthodox one seems particularly slow and prolix, the other approach 'can give a sometimes false sense of the amount of headway made.'¹³²

¹²⁹ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 37.

¹³⁰ Colin Davey quoted in Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 37.

¹³¹ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 37.

¹³² Ibid.

With regard to the idea of ecumenism as an endeavour that needs to be carried out together by all Christians, Evans notes that ‘the “doing together” always proves to contain within it, in practice, elements of the learning-processes of the preliminary stages.’¹³³ This is another very important aspect to consider when speaking about ecumenism versus pre-ecumenism. The role of ‘ecumenical learning’, a key syntagm in ecumenical terminology, is of extreme importance in the ecumenical movement as the whole ecumenical movement could be understood as a comprehensive learning exercise, as an ongoing learning process.

However, ecumenical learning, as a permanent concern, is not about learning theory/information, but about learning experience. A real risk is perceived in envisioning ecumenical learning as a mere intellectual exercise when it should be perceived rather as an active participatory process. As expressed in the WCC document *Magna Charta on Ecumenical Formation in Theological Education*:

‘Ecumenical learning is what happens when diverse persons, rooted in their own faith traditions and complex experiences of culture, gender, nationality, race, call, etc., become open and responsive to the richness of perspectives in the struggle of others, together seeking to know God and to be faithful to God’s intention for them in their world.’¹³⁴

Ecumenical learning is a concept wider than ‘education’, it does not refer to the study of disciplines, subjects or skills. Rather it is an aspect and a key methodology for approaching and understanding ecumenism. It is not merely an approach that seeks to bring the joy and delight of partaking in each other’s wisdom, but an essential ethos which enables Christians to encounter God and to fulfil more fully His design for the world.

Nobody has deepened perhaps more coherently the ‘learning’ component of ecumenism than Paul D. Murray, whose excellent project centred on *Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning* seems to be particularly efficient and successful today, engaging numerous theologians from different traditions. Murray’s whole vision of ecumenism rests on the ‘learning’ element, primarily as a vector informing Christian transformation, conversion and improvement. Murray’s conviction is that ‘unless this commitment to transformational receptivity be made the explicit driving-motor of ecumenical engagement then no amount of refined conceptual clarification and

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ *Magna Charta on Ecumenical Formation in Theological Education in the 21st century - 10 key convictions*. (ETE/WCC-Reference document for use in associations of theological schools and colleges, WOCATI and in the Edinburgh 2010 process.) Accessed on 30 May 2013 at https://www.oikoumene.org/en/folder/documents-pdf/WOCATI_2008_-_Magna_Charta_on_Ecumenical_Theological_Education_in_the21st_century-ETE_Reference_document.pdf

reconciliation of differing theological languages alone will lead to real practical growth and change in the respective lives of the participating churches.¹³⁵ It is a vision that rightly places learning and receptivity at the very inception and core of ecumenical theology. Murray draws attention to the fact that, if *metanoia* or conversion lies at the heart of the Christian life, then this cannot simply happen effectively without a receptive ethos, without the willingness to learn. As Murray emphasises, this does not lead to a dilution or diminishing of one's identity, but on the contrary to a fuller understanding and living of one's faith:

...the envisaged process of receptive ecumenical learning is not about becoming less Catholic (or less Methodist, less Anglican, or whatever) – as lowest common denominator versions of ecumenism and ecumenical ecclesiology imply – but about becoming more deeply, more richly, more fully Catholic (more fully Methodist, more fully Anglican, etc.), precisely through a process of imaginatively explored and critically discerned receptive learning from other's particular gifts.¹³⁶

Thus if participation, as essential principle of ecumenical processes, is understood as an aspect of 'doing/living theology' and not merely as a programmatic process, one must not forget that learning remains a fundamental part of both theology and of participation – whether ecumenical or not. The eminently participatory aspect of this 'receptive' vision suits very well the Orthodox understanding of theological praxis and can bring a positive contribution in the Orthodox engagement with ecumenism.

2.2.6. *Ecumenism as participatory endeavour, theological and spiritual process*

To say that ecumenism is a *dynamic* reality, is to say that it requires commitment and action, and is not a given. An environment, for instance, in which people from different Christian denominations work or study together is not an 'ecumenical reality' *per se*, its ecumenical character is not a given, it is not an inescapable fact – not to the extent to which an environment including people of different nations could be immediately deemed as 'international.' In order for an environment to be ecumenical it is imperative that its members *want* it to be ecumenical, that they *commit* themselves to this vision. It has already been implied above that, by its original vocation, ecumenism is a matter of faith. It springs from spiritual life and is in effect a manifestation of love, the lack of which led to the divisions within the Church in the first place.

But how can ecumenism signify action, commitment and practical engagement and, at the same time, constitute part of the Christian faith, with its more spiritual and not so easy to quantify or assess facets such as prayer and faith in God's help and work? In

135 Murray, 'Receptive ecumenism and Catholic learning', p. 14.

136 Ibid., p. 16.

our modern world this almost seems like a contradiction in terms. This study proposes an understanding of 'faith' that allows for action and practice, and operates within the same perimeter as the praxis of the Church. Faith and prayer are not to be understood merely as 'passive', 'reflective', 'contemplative' states, but active forms of engagement. Prayer was once to be understood as a pre-condition for theology, and theology was considered to be sterile without concrete commitment and action. The trouble now is that the duality 'action-prayer' has come to be associated with the dichotomies of 'practice-theory' and 'trust-suspicion'. Faith is an uncontrollable unfathomable reality, hence suspicious of human manipulation and interpretation. Action is a clear, palpable, controllable and quantifiable, therefore dependable, reality. While this study attempts to place ecumenism and faith/spiritual life in an unbreakable connection, it doesn't however suggest that this area of operation should remain the only *locus operandi* for ecumenism, but should be accompanied by concrete programmatic action.

First and foremost, ecumenism deals with interrelations between people, and, although generally perceived as having a 'wider' global, international, inter-denominational orientation, ecumenism starts at the level of the diocese, of the parish and ultimately at the level of every Christian. Ecumenism originates and happens on a personal and inter-personal level, and – from a theological point of view – it takes place within the operational perimeter of the Holy Spirit, and within the matrix of the inter-personal, unifying yet differentiating love of the Trinity. To speak only of a programmatic, institutional ecumenism, and thus to 'depersonalize' it to a degree, leads to an incomplete understanding of the concept. On the other hand, retaining ecumenism within the sphere of theological parameters does not imply keeping it in the world of sterile and impractical theorizing, but underlines its affiliation with the *praxis* aspect of theology. In acquiring its vocation of action and engagement, ecumenism does not break away from theology as an independent 'specialist' approach, but remains an integral part of theology.

This vision allows ecumenism to remain inextricably linked to the spiritual components of Christian life – prayer, liturgy, *metanoia*. These aspects inform a kind of spiritual dynamic engagement which leads to a gradual and continuous transformation of the human being. It also points to the fact that ecumenism, as 'mainstream' theology, is a calling and a vocation addressed to all, and not only to a specialized few. Essentially, when the Orthodox insist stubbornly in ecumenical circles upon the necessity of addressing theology as a whole – and thus undermining the more nuanced

and orderly approach towards theology – they are often acting out of alarm that the liturgical, spiritual elements of theology might come to be neglected.

Needless to say this vision of a dynamic, spiritual ecumenism would be much more easily understood and embraced by the Orthodox contingent, who often equates spiritual, liturgical life – sometimes with oversimplifying consequences – with the praxis of the Church. A key ancient phrase, oft-quoted, that synthesizes the Orthodox understanding of theology comes from Saint Evagrius of Pontus (345-399): ‘A theologian is one who knows how to pray, and he who prays in spirit and in truth is by that very act a theologian.’¹³⁷ It is true that in its original understanding theology implied participation in the liturgical life of the Church, it implied an experience of faith. This assertion implicitly sets a proviso: one cannot be a theologian unless one prays, thus placing theologizing and prayer in inescapable interdependence.

In the Orthodox tradition prayer represents a wider concept and it refers essentially to the whole spectrum of Church life: the inner life of the faithful, their liturgical life, their Eucharistic communion; even their pastoral and charitable acts will be seen as consequences of prayer. Without this life in prayer, or rather in the community of prayer, no one can be a theologian.

The concepts of ‘prayer,’ ‘worship’ and ‘community’ in the Orthodox understanding are all linked together through the Eucharistic Liturgy, around which the whole life of the faithful is seen to revolve. For the Orthodox, any of the theological angles be they dogmatic, doctrinal, pastoral, etc, will relate back to the regulating point of reference which is seen to be Eucharistic Liturgical life. Even pastoral activity is seen as a continuation and a ‘consequence’ of the Liturgy; the Liturgy has as its main ‘purpose’ the bringing of the communion in love of the Triune God into human society. Prayer is the beginning of praxis, but remains praxis nevertheless. From this perspective, ecumenical engagement too should spring from and remain connected to the liturgical prayerful life of each individual within the community of the Church, and should be closely linked to the spiritual praxis of the Church.

The risk here for the Orthodox, as is also the case with their understanding of pastoral/social engagement, is that commitment often gets trapped in the higher spiritual, prayerful and liturgical arena, where it remains, as it were, in awe of its own magnificence, and fails to cross over to the more mundane realities of Church life. In ecumenical circles, the Orthodox preference for theological dialogue over the

¹³⁷ From *On prayer*, 60 (P.G. lxxix., 1180B). Cited by Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 215.

encounters that focus on programmatic action-taking is well-known and often frustrating for the Western participants, as is the Orthodox predilection to re-assemble together all the elements of theology during discussions, when the other participants are in fact trying to separate them for the sake of having a focused approach. It can be argued that, used in moderation and with discernment, the tendency towards such a 'holistic' approach is ultimately beneficial both to the ecumenical context, as it ensures that the spiritual aspects remain under consideration in all discussions, but also to the Orthodox, as it constantly reminds them that concrete action-taking commitment is also an integral part of their theology.

For indeed the Orthodox paradigm of commitment, in its original understanding, is two-pronged: on the one hand there is the spiritual, liturgical, prayerful engagement, which is seen as the starting point and source of all Christian life. On the other hand there is the participatory aspect of a concrete nature, when faith generates or is transformed into deeds, and when personal Church engagement is brought down to the everyday societal sphere. This dual approach is expressed in the Orthodox tradition as the marriage between 'the sacrament of the altar' and the 'sacrament of the brother.'¹³⁸ Thus, although perceived as informing all Church life, the Liturgy does not represent the sole 'expected' commitment of Christians in the community. The very person who shaped the order of the Eucharistic Liturgy celebrated most frequently by the Orthodox up to this day, St John Chrysostom,¹³⁹ saw the existence of *two* complementary *altars* – one inside the Church, but also another altar which we encounter in our daily life, which is in effect 'the poor, the suffering, those in need, the homeless, all who are in distress.'¹⁴⁰

Chrysostom strongly emphasized the 'sacrament of the brother' by which he understood that philanthropy and service which Christians are to offer and perform in their public social life and which he saw as inextricably connected and complementary to Eucharistic worship. This 'second altar' and sacrament have often been referred to

¹³⁸ In Bria's words: 'The dynamics of the liturgy go beyond the boundaries of the Eucharistic assembly to serve the community at large. The eucharistic liturgy is not an escape into the inner realms of prayer, a pious turning away from social realities; rather, it calls and sends the faithful to celebrate "the sacrament of the brother" outside the temple in the marketplace, where the cries of the poor and marginalised are heard.' Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission and witness from an Orthodox perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), p. 20.

¹³⁹ St John Chrysostom's Liturgy is celebrated throughout the whole year, but there are two other Liturgies celebrated in special festive periods of the year, that of St. Basil the Great, performed during Great Lent and on Christmas, Theophany, and St. Basil's Day; and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, served on weekdays during Great Lent.

¹⁴⁰ Cited in Ware, 'Go forth in peace. The Liturgy after the Liturgy', accessed on 10 February 2013, <http://www.incommunion.org/2004/12/11/go-forth-in-peace> (2004).

by modern-day Orthodox theologians as ‘the Liturgy after the Liturgy.’¹⁴¹ ‘Having received Christ in the Holy Gifts,’ says Bishop Kallistos Ware, ‘we then go out from the Church, going back to the world to share Christ with all those around us.’¹⁴² This is not exclusively an Orthodox approach. The Anglican academic and priest George Guiver wrote that:

One way in which the saving events are present in the liturgy is through their real presence in us, in our lives, in the lives of our neighbours and in the daily ‘liturgy’ of living in, through and among them. We bring the presence with us when we come to Church.... There are in fact two dimensions of the same thing: Christ in our neighbour, and Christ in the liturgy. The former merely pursued on its own ... leads to spiritual exhaustion, while the latter pursued in isolation can cause God to withdraw, so that we are in danger of being left with an empty shell.’¹⁴³

The fact that the theme of ‘the Liturgy after the Liturgy’ was popularised in an ecumenical context by the Orthodox ecumenist, academic and priest Ion Bria is indicative of the fact that the Orthodox are often ‘pushed’, within the ecumenical milieu, into articulating and developing their understanding of concrete social participation, but also of the fact that the Orthodox are keen to place the ecumenical endeavour within the reality of the ‘second Liturgy’, that of concrete action inspired from and nourished by common and individual prayer, constantly anchored in the communion with Christ, and, through him, with others. In fact, for Bria, ‘the Liturgy after the Liturgy’ model is seen as ‘an inspiration and impulse for reconstructing the Church in history after the Eucharistic model and vision.’¹⁴⁴

However, the idea of ecumenism as dynamic praxis and spiritual action, although favoured and encouraged predominantly by the Orthodox, does not represent a purely Orthodox conception. Yves Congar’s vision of ecumenism is closely linked to the concept of *metanoia*, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter, and a relevant passage from his book *Dialogue between Christians* is worth quoting again in this context:

Ecumenism is not a specialty. It presupposes a movement of conversion and reform co-extensive with the whole life of the community, the Church. It seemed to me also that each individual’s ecumenical task lay in the first place in the home among his own people. Our business was to rotate the Catholic Church through a few degrees on its own axis in the direction of convergence towards others, and a possible unanimity with them, in accordance with a deeper and closer fidelity to our unique source, our common source.¹⁴⁵

Congar stresses here the idea that ecumenism is a natural vocation of theology (‘not a speciality’), that it triggers a *metanoia* on a spiritual level, and on the personal level of

141 See Bria, ‘The Liturgy after the Liturgy’, p. 20; Ware, ‘Go forth in peace. The Liturgy after the Liturgy’.

142 Ware, ‘Go forth in peace’.

143 Quoted in Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy*, p. 84.

144 Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy*, p. 87.

145 Congar, *Dialogue between Christians*, p. 21.

each individual. *Metanoia* seems to circulate back and forth from the individual to the community, and from the community to the individual. When the individual is reformed by an exposure and commitment to the ecumenical reality, then he/she passes this reform on to the community, which in turn sanctions it and encourages further conversion. Also of great importance is his insistence that ecumenism should happen first in one's own tradition before reaching out into the wider *oikumene*. A movement of convergence towards others is part of our own Christian calling and faith, and all that is necessary for a reactivation of this vocation is a slight paradigm shift – expressed as a rotation of the Church 'through a few degrees on its own axis'.

A spiritual starting point is also preferred by Anglican theologian and ecumenist Paul Avis, but this time with a pneumatological slant:

'There is a crucial difference between a vision of unity inspired by the Holy Spirit, which seeks to move towards the ultimate horizon of visible unity step by step, matching practical initiatives to doctrinal agreement, and escapist fantasizing that builds castles in the air to evade the pain and scandal of division now. Head and heart must come together in ecumenical work. The need for clear-sighted realism need not mean that pragmatism becomes the order of the day. Ecumenism seen as 'the art of the possible' cannot dispense with the sustaining vision of the glorious body of Christ.'¹⁴⁶

This is another vision of a spiritual ecumenism, seeing head and heart, intellectual approach and prayer, united as one, but also warning against any excessively pragmatic approaches to ecumenism, which Avis sees as conjunctural, and as attempts to 'evade the pain and scandal of division'. The road towards unity, Avis suggests, is one that requires patience and faith, a vision inspired by the Holy Spirit and a constant interweaving of practice and doctrine. He leaves little chance for any endeavours outside these parameters and considers these to be a totally futile exercise - 'building castles in the air.'

Following all the considerations above, the premise of this section has been to propose the idea that, when one is entering into ecumenical activities and encounters, one must be aware that he/she needs to commit to this reality not only on a programmatic level, but also on a deeply spiritual level. That, although an eminently participatory endeavour, ecumenism remains firmly anchored in the realm of theology and in close connection with its spiritual components: prayer, liturgy, inner transformation. This means that ecumenical participation is as much about prayer as it is about dialogue and sharing and this type of spiritually-grounded ecumenism could constitute the

¹⁴⁶ Avis, 'Unreal worlds meeting', p. 424.

beginning of a new paradigm, more suited for the twenty-first century, an ecumenism of faith and commitment.

However, if this study, and many of the quoted sources in this section, are proposing the language of 'commitment' as a starting paradigm for ecumenism, this generates another interesting and very edifying tension – that between the categories of 'trust' and 'suspicion', mentioned already in the beginning of this section. Thus for those Orthodox venturing outside of their comfort zone and outside their area of full trust, namely the Tradition of the Church which places Liturgy at the heart of their understanding of the Church and prayer at the core of Christian life, brings a paralysing sense of fear and suspicion. On the other hand the Protestants view the full and whole commitment of a spiritual, liturgical, Church-centred kind, as proposed by the Orthodox, with a good degree of unease and suspicion.

The reflections of Anglican theologian Zoë Bennett, taken from an article drafted jointly with the author of this study are particularly relevant. In response to a model of pastoral theology presented from an Orthodox perspective and one which relied heavily on the praxis aspect of theology, seen, as above, to include prayer, inner and liturgical life above and alongside the practical commitment of the faithful, Bennett identifies a key question in the 'tension between critique and commitment', raised by the Orthodox emphasis on the inner life and the liturgical life. For Bennett:

These models and priorities speak of a strongly churchly and spiritual orientation for pastoral theology. [...] The Orthodox vision of faithful theology and practice, which emphasizes communion, personal experience, participation, vision, liturgical transformation and transfiguration, has implications in the realm of the epistemology of pastoral theology and practice. [...] This is praxis, but it is praxis expressed in quite different language from the Marxian or quasi-Marxian language of critical reflection on practice, especially where that critical reflection is sourced and fuelled by social or psychological analyses based on secular knowledge.¹⁴⁷

Although referring to pastoral theology and not specifically to ecumenism, this passage is relevant as it is a direct reflection on an ecumenical interface. It is very likely that this kind of reaction is often triggered, not unreasonably, in Protestant participants in ecumenical contexts by the Orthodox insistence on a Church-centred approach of faith and spiritual life, by their understanding of a spiritual, prayerful ecumenism. As Bennett suggests, critical engagement with the societal reality with emphasis on a systematic analysis which is based upon the secular findings of psychology and

¹⁴⁷ Zoe Bennett and Razvan Porumb, 'Studying pastoral theology in an ecumenical context', In *JATE* 8.1 (2011) 38-52, p. 48.

sociology seems to be very different – perhaps incompatible – to the Orthodox approach of total faith. Bennett later asks in earnestness:

‘If, however, pastoral theology and pastoral care is to “begin and end in God” rather than in the human situation and in secular critical disciplines, I have a question. Is it possible to begin and end in God while not falling foul of an ideological naïveté which mistakes the human mediations of God for the divine voice itself? How may we be trustful of the truth and inhabit a tradition in love, while at the same time recognizing, naming and refusing the abuse which is done when human manipulation, distortion and folly masquerade as the means of transformation, transfiguration and growth into the maturity of the divine image?’¹⁴⁸

Whilst this is a valid line of questioning which the Orthodox should also take into account, it does signal an incompatibility of approaches that lies beyond the ecclesiological and doctrinal spheres, and has to do with an understanding of ‘faith’ itself. Orthodox, and other non-Western groups of Christians as well, take faith unquestionably for what it seems: total trust in God and his work, a total commitment to Church life and an abandonment into full hope in God and into a life of prayer. Although the Orthodox do acknowledge that these aspirations are in themselves sterile without an active concrete participation in the life of human society, the language of critical analysis is seldom to be found in Orthodox exploits. For the Orthodox an overly analytical approach is often deemed too much of a secular device and too modern a tool to employ in matters related to faith. These tools seem to represent overly cynical, ‘materialistic’ and distrustful approaches vis-à-vis what is, essentially, ‘faith’. That is not to say that such approaches are totally rejected, and the growing body of modern and academic theological reflection in the Orthodox world is a testimony to that.

As is often the case with fundamental tensions, this too can be seen as a complementary duality. As Bennett notes: ‘Perhaps we can move nearer to a satisfactory way forward in this as we learn to look through the eyes of Christian traditions which ask radical questions of our own.’¹⁴⁹ A current wide-spread Orthodox reading of the ecumenical context is marred by suspicion, which prevents a genuine commitment to the ecumenical cause from taking place. The move towards a paradigm of trust is essential – and it is a move which both the Orthodox and the Western Churches are to make. It is perhaps a symbolic picture that all traditions should eventually meet on the grounds of common ‘faith,’ in faith.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

2.2.7. *Ecumenism and (pre-) methodology*

Since ecumenism is essentially about 'doing', about 'action', the obvious question is: How do we do ecumenism? What is one to do, how is one to prepare him/herself to enter this – still – novel reality? Such questions explain and justify the methodological focus of many of the studies on ecumenism of recent years. Instead of tackling the mechanics of ecumenical methodology, this study attempts to address a central problem concerning the ecumenical process which has been its 'impatience', its eagerness to find solutions and concrete measures for the ecumenical context at large. While in itself admirable, this drive finds a source in the outdated ecumenical ethos of concrete and programmatic step-taking towards the achievement of a united Church within the time-frame of the current generation, a vision dating perhaps as far back as the Edinburgh Conference of 1910, and which seems less suitable today.

Paradoxically this drive for achieving concrete and speedy results may have in fact acted as an obstacle to the development of the ecumenical movement. Having so far worked by following the model of convergence – starting from what they hold in common, and attempting to demonstrate that 'their shared patrimony contained the seeds of much closer agreement than had yet been recognized'¹⁵⁰ – ecumenical actors have found themselves in a cul-de-sac. As pointed out by Cardinal Avery Dulles in his arrestingly titled article, 'Saving ecumenism from itself':

'... valuable though it was, the convergence method was not without limitations. Each new round of dialogue raised expectations for the future. The next dialogue, at the price of failure, was under pressure to come up with new agreements. The process would at some point reach a stage at which it had delivered about as much as it could. It would eventually run up against hard differences that resisted elimination by this method of convergence. When the dialogues attempted to go beyond convergence and achieve full reconciliation on divisive issues, they sometimes overreached themselves.'¹⁵¹

A speedy rate of proceeding and a self-applied pressure for ecumenical contexts to 'deliver' according to expectations and to avoid failures and disappointments ultimately seem to have caused ecumenism to collapse under its own weight.¹⁵² The real differences that continued to exist frustratingly came in the way of what was supposed to be a smooth, agreeable and productive process. Thus while the model of convergence, though still a more valid approach than an adversarial one,¹⁵³ may not

150 Cardinal Avery Dulles, in 'Saving ecumenism from itself', in *First Things: A monthly journal of religion and public life*, 178 (Dec. 2007), p23.

151 Ibid.

152 Evans sees the 'rushed' pace of ecumenical processes as one of the 'stumbling-blocks to ecumenical reception'. The other stumbling block is the 'problematic of churches claiming to be uniquely the Church', in *Method in ecumenical theology*, pp. 217-218.

153 See Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 228.

have been as productive as initially hoped. The first condition for a renewed ecumenical endeavour, as seen by Cardinal Dulles, is that 'the various Christian communities be ready to speak and listen to one another.'¹⁵⁴ This attitude seems to suggest the necessity of taking a step back and starting over with a different set of parameters to follow.

Evans also holds that 'we have failed to realise how long the natural time-scale must be' and that 'allowance has to be made for the persistence of patterns of separation.'¹⁵⁵ Congar also reflected that 'schism and heresy are the fruit of impatience and violence. Reunion will be the fruit of long enduring patience.'¹⁵⁶ This very interesting quote places patience in the same category as love, while impatience is identified as one of the sources of the very division of the Church. Evans too identifies impatience as a stumbling block, and maintains that ecumenical endeavours so far have been a way of finding out 'the hard way' that a new mutual approach in the spirit of trust is necessary:

...hope is a necessary virtue in the enterprise along with love and faith, and the acceptance that to some degree ecumenical methodology has to work blind, in trust that God will bring out of what has been happening solutions we cannot yet see. Fear, resentment and hopelessness are the three ecumenical vices which have to be conquered if we are to get anywhere.¹⁵⁷

These reflections suggest not that ecumenical methodology itself has been necessarily wrong, but that the incipient ethos of ecumenism, the way in which ecumenism was approached has been somewhat misguided and founded on overly-optimistic, unrealistic and miscalculated premises. A 're-boot' of the ecumenical endeavour seems to be necessary, a new beginning based upon a different philosophy – of patience and trust. This study therefore proposes that what is currently required is not a methodology of ecumenism, but a 'pre-methodology', the delineation of a valid understanding and reception of ecumenism which would set the basis for a renewed ecumenical movement. It is not yet time for a concrete methodology, as the current impasse of ecumenism requires a change of parameters and of vision. Cardinal Dulles proposes a model of 'mutual attestation' for the participants involved in ecumenical dialogue, a model of 'witnessing' and listening to each other in the spirit of Trinitarian love:

¹⁵⁴ Dulles, 'Saving ecumenism from itself', p. 23.

¹⁵⁵ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 225.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 218.

¹⁵⁷ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, pp. 225-226.

The process of growth through mutual attestation will probably never reach its final consummation within historical time, but it can bring palpable results. It can lead the churches to emerge progressively from their present isolation into something more like a harmonious chorus. Enriched by the gifts of others, they can hope to raise their voices together in a single hymn to the glory of the triune God. The result to be sought is unity in diversity. True progress in ecumenism requires obedience to the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁸

The author alludes here to the fact that 'historical time' may not witness the fruition of ecumenical mutual attestation, to an extent relegating these endeavours to an eschatological reality. However, Cardinal Dulles does not wish to suggest that concrete achievements are not to be expected at all. His view could be seen as a reaction to the overly-programmatic approaches of earlier decades; his proposed vision seems to suggest that an endeavour to find the right spirit and 'attitude' in entering into ecumenism is to remain a constant throughout the historical course of ecumenism. This pre-methodology works according to the same mechanics as that of pre-ecumenism which was proposed at an earlier stage. An ecumenism which will perennially attempt to achieve its own fullness and to become ever more perfect and always to preserve the unity of the Church will need to be addressed through a pre-methodology which constantly seeks to find the right spirit for entering into the dynamics of ecumenical interaction. Thus the philosophy of 'entering into' remains just as important as the philosophy of 'doing' ecumenism.

The paradigm of 'blind' trust and faith, although disconcerting at first for all involved in the process, is proposed by an increasing number of theologians, as seen above. While remaining a useful tool for lucid analysis and critical engagement in the realm of theology, suspicion should make room for an initial approach to ecumenism in trust. This approach is far more demanding than the one based on programmatic convergence and presupposes sacrifices of an almost 'ascetical' nature.¹⁵⁹ Such a form of commitment can only be nourished by faith in the Holy Trinity and in other fellow Christians. In the words of Gillian Evans, a suitable ending to this chapter on Ecumenism: 'We have to trust one another and to take risks with our own ecclesial identities. We have to be open to the Holy Spirit's prompting, which may take us

¹⁵⁸ Dulles, 'Saving Ecumenism', p. 27.

¹⁵⁹ Catholic academic Margaret O'Gara sees ecumenical work as a form of asceticism: 'It invites Christian scholars to enter into a process which may achieve no tangible success or rewards during their lifetime ... ecumenists must follow various ascetical practices: they repeatedly fast from celebrations of the Eucharist when not in full communion with the presider; they spend their time and talents on lengthy study of positions they only gradually understand; they endure the embarrassment and frustration that flow from the sins of their own and their dialogue partner's communion; and frequently their efforts are feared or suspected by members of their own church.' Quoted in Paul Avis, "'Unreal worlds meeting'? Realism and illusion in ecumenical dialogue', p. 424.

anywhere, and at the same time work patiently on the existing structures so as to learn how to share them.’¹⁶⁰

This second chapter has thus followed ecumenism from its beginnings as a passionate and genuine desire towards Christian unity, journeying through an increasingly troubled period throughout the decades, devastated by two fratricidal World Wars, and eventually emerging as a desperate and repentant movement towards compulsory concord. From a theological point of view ecumenism has been revealed fundamentally as a dynamic, active enterprise, a renewal-centred process situated in the sphere of spiritual participation, of personal active involvement. Like Orthodoxy ecumenism is a constant aspect of theology, as its goal is to constantly ‘maintain unity and to counter division.’

The next chapter will tackle the relationship between Orthodoxy and ecumenism with a view to investigating the nature of this interaction on the theological realm, and in particular how the Orthodox relate to other Christians and the special role and mission they feel they have inherited in the wider ecumenical context.

¹⁶⁰ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 228.

CHAPTER THREE: ORTHODOXY AND ECUMENISM

After having addressed separately and in some detail in its first two chapters the concepts and realities of Orthodoxy/Orthodox Church and Ecumenism from the vantage point of ecumenical engagement, this study attempts now, in this third chapter, to address the interaction between these two realities, more specifically the way the Orthodox Church perceives ecumenism, its position vis-à-vis ecumenism, and its understanding of itself in relation to the other Christian communities. These aspects have largely been anticipated in the previous two chapters.

Since the Orthodox rapport with ecumenism is often referred to as a 'problem' or crisis, this chapter will commence by presenting this predicament and the related Orthodox rationale, revolving around the Orthodox Church's view of itself as the 'one, holy and catholic' Church, and the implications this view casts on the perception of other Christians. As Orthodox participation in ecumenical milieux has often come under attack in the Orthodox world, this study then proceeds to address a number of characteristic anti-ecumenical views, investigating their perceptions and argumentation.

Also, since Orthodoxy is put forward as the only 'way of life' for a possibly unified Church, this chapter proceeds to examine briefly what are perceived as 'deviations' from the correct doctrine of the Church. In so doing, this study uses an Orthodox document, 'The Thyateira Confession' which, uniquely, goes in some depth into enumerating the errors of the non-Orthodox traditions. Another extremely important and singular document to which this study is greatly indebted is the Russian Orthodox Church's 'Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox' (2000), a rare instance of an Orthodox Church issuing an official and systematic position with regard to other Christians, and this chapter will tackle it next.

This exploration will then end with a number of points of reflection, in an attempt to better understand the Orthodox position towards ecumenism but also the way this relation affects its understanding of its own identity.

3.1. The Predicament

'We, the Orthodox', writes Romanian priest and scholar Ioan Sauca, director of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Geneva,

might continue to affirm that the Orthodox Church is the *Una Sancta* as it has kept more integrally the fullness of the apostolic faith throughout the centuries. But in order to be faithful, coherent and accountable to our theology, *we must have the courage* to say that the other churches of the WCC fellowship,¹ as they came together in fellowship by fully accepting and affirming the council's theological basis, are also a part of the body of Christ, though the level of their participation in it may be different.²

To make the statement above requires a degree of courage in the Orthodox world, and it represents today, despite its granting to the other Christian Churches only a variable and incomplete level of participation in the body of Christ, an unusual instance of Orthodox ecumenical openness. Though it may look to the outside world neither extreme nor particularly generous, it represents, in its context, a rather bold statement. But why is courage required, and why is there a risk in adopting such a position? This question immediately brings into view the fundamental tension present in Orthodox circles with regard to their participation in Ecumenical contexts: the contradiction between the notion of the Orthodox Church as the *one, true Church*, the very same Church as was founded by Christ himself, the same Church of apostolic times, and the reality of a number of Christian traditions, which, being outside the 'one' and 'true' Church, cannot really be 'Churches'. Yet these Christians who confess Christ as the Son of God and one of the Trinity need a place in the Orthodox vision of theology. Placing them completely outside the Church does not seem right, but on the other hand, ascribing to them a degree of participation in the Church threatens and relativises the very firm position of the Orthodox Church as the *Una Sancta*.

Despite Orthodox involvement in the ecumenical movement from its very early days, in the Orthodox world ecumenism has remained a passionately debated issue, bringing serious divisions within some Orthodox Churches and communities, where anything connected to ecumenism has been fiercely rejected.³ While not necessarily shared by entire Church communities, this position has been strong enough to be reflected in varying degrees in the official declarations of the Orthodox Churches within

¹ My italics.

² Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 225.

³ On the official site of the Russian Orthodox Church, Deacon Nikolai Savchenko writes: 'Ecumenism is dangerous not only in that it strives to distort Orthodoxy, but that it also divides the Orthodox people. On one hand, ecumenism continues to poison the life of the Orthodox Church, and on the other, the enemies of ecumenism find themselves split into many groups, or so-called "jurisdictions," and with every year there are more of them. Division arises among the Orthodox. This is also one of the fruits of ecumenism.' Accessed on 12 September 2009, <http://www.russianorthodoxchurch.ws/01newstucture/pagesen/legacy/savchenkoneku.html>.

ecumenical bodies, where they have often expressed their acute discomfort and dissatisfaction with the agenda, ethos or structure of these institutions, and even threatened to withdraw.

At first sight, an anti-ecumenical position may seem paradoxical when set against some modern theological positions coming from the Orthodox tradition, which sometimes describe ecumenism as a vocation for Orthodoxy ('ecumenical in its very identity')⁴ and which see participation in the ecumenical movement as 'an endeavour in the spirit of love, humility and service to be more involved in a project which is greater than any institutional or confessional interest.'⁵

It is however impossible to neglect the fundamentally different vision that many Orthodox have of Ecumenism, which has in effect been expressed more than once. In his disarmingly honest introduction to the chapter dealing with Orthodox perspective on Ecumenism, in *Ecumenism I: A Doctrinal Approach*, Georges Florovsky articulates a belief and attitude which, as this study has shown already in its first chapter on Orthodoxy, is endemic for most modern Orthodox theologians:

'As a member and priest of the Orthodox Church, I believe that the Church in which I was baptized and brought up is in very truth *the Church*, i.e. *the true Church* and the *only true Church*. [...] I am therefore compelled to regard all other Christian churches as deficient, and in many cases I can identify these deficiencies accurately enough. Therefore for me Christian reunion is simply universal conversion to Orthodoxy.'⁶

This statement, coming from one of the most active Orthodox participants in the history of the ecumenical movement, however paradoxical it may seem, is in effect characteristic of an important number of Orthodox participants and often constitutes the underlying principle which – although this is seldom admitted plainly – informs Orthodox participation in ecumenical contexts. As put by Russian scholar and monastic Philip Riabykh, of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate:

Some Christian communities uphold that it is only the totality of all Christians that makes up the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church and, therefore, that church unity can be attained only through mutual acceptance and recognition. Other communities making up the second group maintain that the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church has not ceased and will never cease to exist in history and, therefore, that in order to attain unity Christians should join it. This view is shared by Orthodox, Oriental Catholic, and Old Catholic churches, as well as some Protestant communities.⁷

⁴ Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 224.

⁵ Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, p. 244.

⁶ Florovsky, *Ecumenism I. A doctrinal approach*, p. 134.

⁷ Philip Riabykh (Hegumen), 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Ecumenism', in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 46:3, Summer 2011, p. 355.

Riabykh describes the views of the former group as 'liberal ecclesiology', while the ecclesiology of the latter group he describes as 'traditional'.⁸ This view clearly proposes as solution for Church unity the joining of the Orthodox Church, and also signals the fact that this perspective on unity does not belong only to the Orthodox – revealing it to be a wider ecclesiological model and not simply an Orthodox particularity. Ecumenical participation thus appears to be, for the 'traditional' groups, informed by an 'agenda' of universal conversion, by a 'concealed' missionary perspective.

This is a puzzling paradox, since it is hard to imagine how an honest ecumenical encounter can happen at all, given such a starting premise. The central question, therefore, around which reflection on the theological rapport between the Orthodox Church and ecumenism will revolve in this chapter is: *Why* do the Orthodox participate in the ecumenical movement, and *how* can they negotiate an involvement in the ecumenical movement, together with their non-Orthodox counterparts? If the Orthodox Church is in fact the one and only Church why does it not rely simply on an explicitly 'one-way', missionary, 'proselytizing' endeavour? As this study will show below, matters are in fact more nuanced and the implications more complex.

There appears to be, at first sight, a simple, clear-cut, definitive logic behind the Orthodox statement that the Orthodox Church is *the One*, true, Catholic and Apostolic Church, keeper and guardian of the fullness of the primary Church of Christ – with regard in particular to the way the Orthodox relate to other Christian Churches and to Orthodox participation in (or absence from) the ecumenical movement. On closer scrutiny though, this position makes things neither easier, nor clearer, nor indeed does it bring a consensus of opinion vis-à-vis ecumenism among the Orthodox, despite it being the honest core belief of most Orthodox theologians. A basic visceral reaction might be simply to withdraw from any ecumenical interaction, as this mode of participation would be seen as compromising the very claim of the Orthodox Church that it is the one true Church – since it would somehow suggest that all 'Churches' are in fact 'alike'.⁹ Nevertheless this has seldom been a position adopted by serious theologians, or by hierarchs of the Orthodox Church, despite it being endemic in a large number of Orthodox groups. As will be shown in more detail later, the official document of the Russian Orthodox Church on the 'Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox' states explicitly: 'We have no right to withdraw from the mission laid

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 330.

upon us by our Lord Jesus Christ, the mission of witnessing the Truth before the non-Orthodox world.’¹⁰

On the contrary when the *Una Sancta* claim has been made – often *precisely* as a clarification when the delicate issue of the Orthodox Church and its relation to the other Churches has arisen – theologians have expanded on it, trying to argue and explain this position and struggling to make sense of what the other Christian denominations are, what their connection to the one Church is, what possibilities there are, if any, for these Churches to enter once again into the primordial unity of the one Church. This analytical process has led to subtly differing views and understandings of the participation of the Orthodox within ecumenical environments, but a common denominator is readily apparent in the writings of Orthodox theologians: ecumenism, as Orthodox see it, has a radically different meaning from the one of other Christians.

Ecumenism, as the reunion of all Christians into the *one true Church*, is ultimately seen as a ‘mission’ of the Orthodox Church to *convert* all various denominations to Orthodoxy, a mission ‘stemming naturally and inescapably from the truly awesome claim that [they] are Orthodox and that [theirs] is the true Church.’¹¹ Again, this view, although seemingly trenchant and definitive, leaves room for a number of nuanced understandings and interpretations.

Professor Sauca has a particularly helpful approach to the matter. He sees this dual understanding of ecumenism as stemming from a dual ecclesiological approach: one Orthodox and the other more generally Protestant.¹² As he points out, this dual approach has long been recognised by the Orthodox as a fundamental stumbling block in the ecumenical movement – as early as 1961, when, following the General Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi, the Orthodox participants issued a statement which said that: ‘The ecumenical problem, as it is understood in the current ecumenical movement, is primarily a problem of the Protestant world. The main question, in this setting, is that of Denominationalism.’¹³ As Sauca puts it:

The problem of Christian unity, or of Christian reunion, is usually regarded in terms of an interdenominational agreement or reconciliation. In the Protestant universe of discourse, such an approach is quite natural. But for the Orthodox it is uncongenial. For the Orthodox, the basic ecumenical problem is that of schism. The Orthodox cannot

10 Quoted in ‘Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox’, on the website of the Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, para. 7.3. Accessed on 31 January 2013, <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/attitude-to-the-non-Orthodox>.

11 Schmemmann, *Church, world, mission*, p. 123.

12 Sauca, ‘The Church beyond our boundaries’, p. 211.

13 Quoted in Sauca, ‘The Church beyond our boundaries’, p. 211.

accept the idea of a parity of denominations and cannot visualize Christian reunion just as an interdenominational adjustment. Unity has been broken and must be recovered.¹⁴

The main problem, therefore, is that the Orthodox are not prepared to see ecumenism as an inter-denominational venture, but rather as an 'anti-denominational' enterprise, as all denominations are to merge into the One Church, *one* unified body of Christians. For the Orthodox, the current status quo of multi-denominationalism represents a status of division and schism, and 'Churches' in the plural are still an anomaly in the body of Christ. The Orthodox Church refuses to see itself as 'denominational', although some theologians from its own circles have questioned the non-denominational character of the Orthodox Church, given its sometimes closed and self-sufficient perspective on itself. Although focusing on a slightly different – though related – reality, when referring to the relatively novel context of 'confessional' Churches, in which category Orthodoxy also finds itself included, renowned contemporary theologian John Zizioulas asks: 'Has a confessional body per se the right to be regarded as Church? A Church must incarnate people, not ideas or beliefs.'¹⁵

3.2. The simple rationale

It is perhaps useful at the outset to review the Orthodox 'thought formula' in defining what the Orthodox Church is in relation to the other Churches, and, similarly, what the other Churches are perceived to be in relation to itself, with a view to make some preliminary observations on certain aspects. Some nuanced variations in formulation, definition and explanation might point to particular angles and perspectives in the understanding of Orthodoxy and ecumenism that could potentially open up new avenues for further exploration of the theme.

A simplified formulation of the Orthodox understanding of its participation in ecumenical milieux might look like this: *The Orthodox Church is the one, true Church of Christ. There can be only one true Church of Christ. There cannot be several Churches of Christ. Consequently, Churches that are not Orthodox are outside the one true Church. Reunion of Christians would mean re-joining the one true Church – the Orthodox Church. Ecumenism – as a move towards the reunion of Christians – can only mean the re-joining of and reunion with the Orthodox Church.*

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Zizioulas, *Being as communion*, pp. 259-260.

3.2.1. *The Orthodox Church is the one true Church*

As this study has shown from its outset, the Orthodox define themselves as *the one, true Church* and they do so *in immediate relation to the other Churches*. In the words of Metropolitan Kallistos Ware: 'The Orthodox Church in all humility believes itself to be the "one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church", of which the Creed speaks: such is the fundamental conviction which guides Orthodox in their relations with other Christians'.¹⁶ It is worth mentioning again that the implied meaning of the term 'Orthodox' – (*orthos* = correct, right and *doxa* = belief/opinion) is that the 'Orthodox' Church is the correct faith to be distinguished from other Churches that have somehow deviated from it. The Orthodox Church has labelled itself the 'correct faith' precisely as a consequence of perceiving other Churches practising or witnessing an 'incorrect faith'.

The Orthodox Church is seen as having 'a special and exceptional position in divided Christendom, as the bearer of and the witness to the tradition of the ancient undivided Church from which all existing denominations stem, by way of reduction and separation.'¹⁷ The preservation of the fullness of the truth of Christ is so important that Orthodoxy comes sometimes to be perceived as sufficient unto itself, untouchable and unchangeable, unaffected by schisms or human actions. Its very internal logic becomes ruthless when it addresses the idea of participation in the one true Church. If one happens to be outside this plenary inheritance of truth he/she remains irremediably and tragically affected by this imperfection, now and possibly forever. For Staniloae, the 'incomplete participation in Christ' of the other Christians 'may have as a consequence an incomplete participation in Him also in the life to come.'¹⁸

There are however other interpretations of a different order of what the Orthodox Church is, as was shown in the first chapter of this study. For Bulgakov, 'Orthodoxy is the Church of Christ on earth'. It 'is not an institution; it is a new life with Christ and in Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit'¹⁹ For many other Orthodox theologians Orthodoxy also means the way of life in Christ, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the fullness of truth which aspires to reveal itself before the whole world by its very internal structure.

¹⁶ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 316.

¹⁷ Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 212.

¹⁸ Staniloae, *Teologia dogmatica Ortodoxa. Vol II.*, p. 277.

¹⁹ Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 9.

3.2.2. *There can be only one true Church of Christ. Churches that are not Orthodox are outside the one true Church.*

The concepts of *oneness* and *unity* are of particular importance to the Orthodox, and they regard as unacceptable the existence of 'several Churches'. As seen before, theologians speak of the *one* Church that is true and plenary. The immediate logic seems to be that, since there cannot be 'several' Churches, all of the existing Churches *but one* are redundant, and the only one that is true is the one that has kept and guarded Orthodoxy, the fullness of the primary Church of Christ. The unity and oneness of the Church however are not seen as institutional. Unity in this sense is applicable essentially to faith. From this springs a certain relativism regarding who is or is not within the boundaries of this one Church. There appears a tension between the necessity for certain 'visible' limits delineating the true Church and the blurring of these limits implied by the possibility of faith to manifest itself in any human context and by the 'freedom' of the Holy Spirit to move and inspire humans at his will. Theologians remain aware that despite certain worldly limits of the Church, she never ceases to be 'cosmic', in an expanded understanding of 'catholicity'.

3.2.3. *Reunion of Christians would mean re-joining the one true Church*

Since the reunion of Christians must mean – in the perception of the Orthodox – the re-joining of the one true Orthodox Church, the purpose of the Orthodox in ecumenical meetings can only be to try and bring the other denomination back to Orthodoxy. Surprisingly Orthodox theologians often use the rather strong language of 'conversion'. Yet, they hasten to add, this conversion should not be seen as submission to some centre of influence: 'it must not be thought that Orthodox demand the submission of other Christians to a particular centre of power and jurisdiction. Orthodoxy desires their reconciliation not their absorption.'²⁰

Metropolitan Kallistos makes here the point that Orthodoxy is not some sort of 'jurisdiction' but is implicitly a oneness of truth, faith and life. This emphasis is meant to make it clear that theology and doctrine are more important for the Orthodox than mere 'membership' and 'jurisdiction', although the reality remains that converts to Orthodoxy do eventually enter by joining one of the local Orthodox Churches under the authority of an Orthodox Episcopal see. There is a contradiction between the idea of bringing other Christians back into the Orthodox Church and the idea that their integration within Orthodoxy be seen as 'reconciliation', and not 'absorption.' Again

²⁰ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 317.

this can be seen more like an 'image' and less like a practical consideration, and the proposed view is that ultimately the Orthodox spirit is one of 'reconciliation' and not of 'political' allegiance. Metropolitan Kallistos also presents the sketch for an ecumenical 'solution'. Since no 'submission' is required, and since the Orthodox Church is already a 'federated' body of local Churches, reunion of various Churches within Orthodoxy should indeed not be difficult. Here he is echoing the views of the highly influential Bulgakov, who wrote in 1935:

Thus the Christian world should become Orthodox; but just what does that mean? It is true that individuals often join themselves to Orthodoxy by becoming members of one of the national Churches, but this fact offers no solution for the question of the relationship between ecclesiastical communities or confessions. The only solution would be the following: these communities, while preserving intact their historical, national and local characters, would draw near to Orthodox doctrine and life and would become capable of joining forces in the unity of the ecumenical Church, as autonomous or autocephalous churches. Such an exterior reunion is not impossible, for all ecclesiastical communities, even those whose road is farthest from that of the Orthodox Church, preserve a considerable part of that universal tradition, and, as a result of this, share in Orthodoxy.²¹

Again, Orthodoxy is presented as 'doctrine and life' and it is to this reality that the other Christians are called to or are to be 'converted' to. The strong belief that Orthodoxy is the way of life in the truth of Christ 'enables' or 'justifies' the Orthodox to use strong words like 'conversion,' as they strongly believe that this is *the* way to salvation. However, if Christians are then to join an Orthodox way or 'philosophy' of life, it would be a bold claim to say that the Orthodox Christians do indeed 'possess' already and have fully appropriated that way of life. Surely, this type of life, in fullness of communion with Christ, can only be a goal and not something accomplished and owned. As was pointed out earlier, this would then imply that all Christians, Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike, are called to this way of life – a very important premise for this study.

However, what does this Orthodox 'way of life' look like, and how can one be converted to it? As will become more evident later in this chapter, adopting this way of living would imply – besides renouncing all doctrinal 'deviations' in the respective non-Orthodox context – an immersion into the sacramental life of the Orthodox Church. Once one enters the sacramental life of the Orthodox Church, sharing the Eucharist and all of the other mysteries, his/her life would change, not primarily through a conversion of doctrine, but in a 'mystical' intrinsic way, as the sacramental universe itself regulates faith, doctrine, life and ethos. In the words of Father Philip Ryabikh, *Orthodoxia* – a term introduced by him as 'the totality of criteria to be met by

21 Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, pp. 187-188.

a true Church of Christ'²² – rests on three essential criteria, as identified in the 'Basic Principles' document of the Russian Orthodox Church: 'the preservation of the doctrinal truth, the liturgical and hierarchical order and the principles of spiritual life.'²³

3.3. Anti-ecumenical positions from the Orthodox

As a significant part of the Orthodox world – in some parts, even, the majority – see ecumenism from a negative perspective, this study will bring a few instances of anti-ecumenical thought, in an attempt to identify and systematize the main related trends and perceptions with regard to ecumenism and Orthodox participation. Though often passionate and sometimes extreme, these positions are not to be discarded immediately as irrelevant, as they contain valuable insights into the heart of the problem as regards Orthodox ecumenical participation. In the helpful words of Orthodox academic John Jillions:

It would be a mistake to dismiss this outlook too quickly, although one might disagree profoundly. There are people of intelligence, sincerity and deep Orthodox faith who hold these views and are opposed to ecumenical contacts of any kind. It should also be added that many of these anti-ecumenists are also remarkably full of love. [...] They consider Ecumenism to be 'hypocritical love' in much the same way that it would be 'hypocritical love' to give someone a hot toddy when what they needed was to have a tumour excised.²⁴

'The Church of Christ',²⁵ writes the very popular Serbian and Balkan-famous spiritual father, Justin Popovitch, 'has defined her stand towards heretics—and all non-Orthodox are heretics—once and for all through the Holy Apostles and the Holy Fathers, namely, through the Holy Theanthropic Tradition, which is unique and immutable. In keeping with this stand, Orthodox are forbidden to engage in joint prayer or liturgical communion with heretics. For, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (II Corinthians 6:14-15).'

²⁶

22 Philip Riabykh (Hegumen), 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Ecumenism', in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 46:3, Summer 2011, p. 356.

23 'Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox', on the website of the Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, para 1.19. Accessed on 31 January 2013, <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/attitude-to-the-non-Orthodox>.

24 John A. Jillions, 'Orthodox Christianity in the West: the ecumenical challenge', in Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 282-283.

25 i.e. the Orthodox Church.

26 Cited in 'The Greatest Snare of the Enemy. The World Council of Churches: The World Hodgepodge of Heresies', accessed on 1 June 2009, http://www.synodinresistance.org/Theology_en/E3a4012Popovic.pdf.

This is the kind of 'popular' attitude vis-à-vis ecumenism one is likely to encounter in best-selling writings of many of the Church bookshops in Eastern Europe or when searching the internet. It is often through this type of literature that Orthodox believers hear of ecumenism and indeed of relations of their Church with the outer Christian world. Theological analysis or debate in opposition to ecumenism is often too passionate for its own good, as the quotation above demonstrates, which mars fundamentally its objectivity. The oft-employed language of 'heresy' rushes to place other Christians in a realm of 'darkness' and 'unrighteousness', a status which leaves little room for further theological argument. This is not always the case, however, and analysis will focus in the next pages on a summary of the main arguments against ecumenism and ecumenical participation to be found in some of today's more typical anti-ecumenical writings.

Writings from exponents of the anti-ecumenical current are almost always characterized by an underlying frustration that seems to range – depending on the person or the context – from discomfort and disappointment to anger and condemnation. It is interesting that such frustration is directed mainly not so much against ecumenical theology, the ecumenical movement or against particular contexts, as against the so called 'Orthodox ecumenists' who are seen as perilous deviants from the inheritance of the Orthodox tradition, and so are occasioning – or according to some already completing – a 'schism' and a major perversion of their inheritance.

For anti-ecumenists, among the main compromises that Orthodox ecumenists are charged with since the inception of the ecumenical movement are:

- That upon joining the ecumenical movement they *succumbed too easily to its 'Protestant ethos'*;
- That this has lead – so it is claimed – to an ever-increasing *superficiality, relativism, and 'diluted' expression of genuine Orthodox ecclesiology*. The spirit of ecumenical encounters has become characterised by a '*naked sentimentality*',²⁷ a love that has no substance, since it is divorced from the wholeness of Truth as safeguarded by the Orthodox Church.
- That the ecclesiology of Orthodox ecumenists has become by degrees, in the words of a contemporary theologian, quoted below, a 'schizophrenic' one, trying to reconcile *two contradictory views*: on the one hand affirming the Orthodox Church as the One, True

²⁷ Father Justin Popovich, in *Orthodox faith and life in Christ* (Belmont, MA: Institute of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1994), p. 170.

Church and on the other, accepting a 'plurality' of Churches which are all part of the Christian world.

- That all of the above lapses have lead eventually to the failure of the initial goal of Orthodox participation – i.e. the conversion of non-Orthodox to Orthodoxy.
- That it has led already, according to some more radical anti-ecumenists, to a *rupture or schism within the Orthodox Church*, and continues to corrupt it, with an ultimate and deliberate goal of annihilating it completely.

3.3.1. *The Protestant ethos, the 'parallel' ecclesiology, the 'dilution' and 'double-thought' of Orthodox ecclesiological understanding*

That the Ecumenical movement already had a distinctively Protestant ethos and agenda when the Orthodox joined the WCC in 1961 is indeed difficult to dispute. This has remained a reality for the Orthodox Churches up until the late 90s, when the Orthodox Churches officially and arguably in unison declared their discomfort with this situation, which then led to the creation of the *Special Commission regarding Orthodox Participation within the WCC* – one of the crucial events in the ecumenical movement at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

More importantly, perhaps, as Sauca proposes – speaking of the particular context of the WCC – the Orthodox brought their own understanding of ecclesiology, whereby ecumenism was understood as the healing of a long-standing schism, and reunion into the one Church; whereas the Protestant participants, according to their own ecclesiological vision, saw ecumenism as an 'interdenominational adjustment'.²⁸ According to Sauca, all the problems relating to Orthodox participation in WCC stem from this parallel interpretation of ecumenism which, though acknowledged quite a while back, has continued to be employed up to this day. The Orthodox have continued to hold onto their understanding while making concessions to their Protestant counterparts' vision, which has led, as some anti-ecumenists have observed with justification, to a somewhat 'schizophrenic' position of the Orthodox within the ecumenical movement.

Most Orthodox participants within the WCC, long before the Special Commission, and despite acknowledging an undeniable contribution by the Orthodox on various theological positions of the Council, were of the opinion that the organisation of the

²⁸ Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 211.

Council did not allow for a full and 'equal' participation of the Orthodox in ecumenical meetings. In the words of Father Alexander Schmemmann:

The important fact of Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement and in the encounter—after so many centuries of almost total separation—between the Orthodox and the West is precisely that the Orthodox were not given a choice; that from the very beginning they were assigned, not only seats but a certain place, role and function within the ecumenical movement. These assignments were based on Western theological and ecclesiological presuppositions and categories, and they reflected the purely Western origin of the ecumenical idea itself. ... Thus, even before we could realize it, we were caught in the essentially Western dichotomies—Catholic versus Protestant, horizontal versus vertical, authority versus freedom, hierarchical versus congregational—and were made into representatives and bearers of attitudes and positions which we hardly recognized as ours and which were deeply alien to our tradition.²⁹

This observation by a more 'moderate' anti-ecumenist, Fr Schmemmann, is reasonably fair and insightful, although the suggestion that the 'dichotomies' and attitudes characterizing Ecumenical thought were 'deeply alien' to the Orthodox tradition is somewhat far-fetched. It could well be argued, for instance, that in the deeply clericalised Orthodox world, problems of hierarchy versus congregation certainly had some relevance. Similarly, the feminist focus of many of the ecumenical initiatives could not be said to have had no insights to offer the Orthodox world, where societies were known to be prejudiced – a prejudice that could be argued to have seeped into the very structures of the Church itself.³⁰ Nevertheless, Schmemmann was justified in pointing to a certain 'Western complex' on the part of Orthodox participants, whereby they willingly and complacently embraced 'Western thought forms' and attitudes, whereas their initial role in the ecumenical movement was to bring their own 'thought forms' and views to the table. That a certain complacency ruled amidst the Orthodox ranks is evidenced perhaps by the many decades of 'polite silence' before Orthodox frustrations were finally voiced at the end of the 1990s.

As Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod put it, 'from the very outset it was clear to the Orthodox that collaboration with the World Council of Churches – still more, membership of it – would inevitably mean plunging into the Protestant element or, if you prefer, undergoing a sort of *kenosis*, because the voice of Orthodox witness at

29 Schmemmann, *Church, world, mission*, p. 200.

30 As an example, in 2011, Russian Patriarch Kirill stated feminism was a 'very dangerous' phenomenon 'offering an illusion of freedom to women who should focus on their families and children.' Accessed on 21 January 2011, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/feminism-very-dangerous-russian-church-leader-warns/article10961739>.

ecumenical meetings and in the WCC documents would always be submerged by a chorus of diverse, but essentially Protestant, opinions.’³¹

From a theological point of view, the Protestant view had ‘imposed’ a different understanding of unity/division. The same Metropolitan Nikodim noted that:

‘Unity is regarded as a gift from God belonging, despite the divisions, to the whole of Christendom. This unity is not always visibly manifest to the necessary extent. Christendom as such is thus considered as essentially the one, complete body of the Church of Christ. As for division, it is not understood as the destruction of inner unity and a painful crippling of certain parts of the body of the Church. It is merely regarded as an inadequate awareness (in the minds of divided Christians) of their inner health, and as a lack of courage to proclaim that health to the world through acts which manifest their unity.’³²

While not denying that the unity of the Church was a gift from God, Metropolitan Nikodim, brought to the fore the need for ‘a divine objective basis of ecclesial unity in Christ, i.e. the possibility of intimate communion with Him through faith and through participation in sacramental life, especially in the true Eucharist.’³³ As was mentioned in the first chapter of this study, sacramental life is a frequently recurring element in Orthodox theological writings, whether these are opposed to or in support of ecumenism, a life that ultimately shapes and consolidates, in the Orthodox view, the unity of the Church. Sacraments are perceived either as ‘imperfect’ or lacking altogether in the non-Orthodox Christian world, a fact that has caused and perpetuated Christian division.

It has been this ‘alien’ environment and the Orthodox willingness to integrate with it that has led, it is felt, to a certain ‘relaxation’ of the Orthodox with regard to their ecclesiology. This was a gradual process which started from an initially straightforward, cautious and ‘candid’ approach by the Orthodox participants in the ecumenical movement. ‘It can be maintained’, writes Father John Reeves, a representative anti-ecumenical writer from the United States, ‘that the position of the Orthodox representatives to the meetings of various assemblies of the World Council portrayed fairly accurately an Orthodox ecclesiology: The Orthodox Church was and is the *Una Sancta*, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. It is full; it lacks not.’³⁴

31 Nikodim, Metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod, ‘The Russian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement’, in *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: documents and statements 1902-1975* (Geneva: WCC, 1978), pp. 266-68.

32 Ibid., pp. 273-74.

33 Ibid.

34 John Reeves (Fr.), ‘The Price of Ecumenism. How Ecumenism Has Hurt the Orthodox Church’, accessed on 1 September 2011, http://Orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/tca_priceofecumenism.aspx.

Reeves points out that, in 1957, Orthodox delegates to the North American Faith and Order Study Conference addressed the theme of the study, 'The Unity We Seek' thus: 'The Unity we seek is for us a given Unity which has never been lost, and as a Divine Gift and an essential mark of Christian existence, could not have been lost. For us, this Unity is embodied in the Orthodox Church.'³⁵ Or in the words of Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America: 'We of the Orthodox Church must participate in this pan-Christian movement because it is our duty to impart to our heterodox brethren the riches of our faith, worship, and order, and of our spiritual and ascetic experience.'³⁶

These early positions of the Orthodox participants within the ecumenical movement were in accord with the views expressed by many seminal Orthodox theologians of the time, such as Florovsky, Bulgakov or Ware, all cited earlier in this study. Though this starting point made Orthodox involvement in and understanding of ecumenism very unclear and difficult, almost impossible, since it contrasted so sharply with the Protestant understanding and vision of ecumenism, no one can deny the honest, heartfelt, enthusiastic commitment of these Orthodox scholars to the ecumenical cause, despite the apparently paradoxical premise they embraced. Florovsky is probably the best and most widely known exponent of this type of Orthodox commitment to ecumenism without a 'departure' from Orthodox ecclesiology. It comes perhaps as no surprise that his efforts are perceived as incomprehensible, futile and compromised by today's anti-ecumenists:

'[...] how sad to think that such a great mind and spirit as Fr Georges Florovsky could have been so blinded by his own innocent good will – as to the true nature of the Protestant debacle which has resulted in the disintegration of Western civilization [...] the apostasy and heresy inherent in 'liberal' Protestant theology.'³⁷

Florovsky's 'innocent' struggle to find an honest genuine approach to ecumenism, to reconcile two apparently contrasting views of ecumenism may have been naïve, but it seems up to this day a healthier, more valid and more realistic Orthodox approach to ecumenism. It is an approach that does not avoid key problems and controversies, so it is less conducive to a 'harmonious', irenic ecumenical dialogue, and likely to bring long, heated and uncomfortable debates within ecumenical circles. However

35 George P. Macris, *The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement during the period 1920-1969* (Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 1986), p. 11.

36 Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America speaking to the annual meeting of the US Conference for the WCC, on April 22, 1959. Cited in Reeves, 'The Price of Ecumenism'.

37 Frank Schaeffer, *Dancing alone: The quest for Orthodox faith in the age of false religion* (Brookline: Holy Cross Press, 1994), p. 307.

subsequent statements from Orthodox participants seemed to mark a certain departure from the 'clearer' ecclesiological line of the Orthodox pioneering ecumenists. Statements like the following were likely to upset and puzzle Orthodox hard-liners of the time:

"Orthodox is not the adjective or the qualification of one local church or even of all our Eastern Orthodox Churches...It is not an exclusive but an inclusive term which goes beyond the limits of the churches which call themselves Orthodox. It includes all those churches and believers who seek to offer an honest confession and achieve a life which is untouched by heresies and schisms and to arrive at the wholeness of the divine revelation in Christ."³⁸

While the above statement poses a very interesting perspective through this novel 'dynamic understanding of Orthodoxy',³⁹ it takes a significant risk in re-examining and extending the meaning of 'Orthodoxy,' it speaks of a plurality of Churches, who, moreover are all a virtual part of the greater Orthodox Church. In other words it is too abrupt and too daring a transition from the traditional Orthodox approach. Moreover to propose so hazardous an examination and questioning of what Orthodoxy is, precisely in a context where, as generally understood, the Orthodox are participating mainly to express the wholeness of the truth of faith they have painstakingly inherited, and their whole vision and identity – that may seem for some rather inappropriate.

Such re-examinations have been frequently occasioned by the participation of the Orthodox in ecumenical contexts, and while for some they came as a healthy new exploration of Orthodox identity, for others they generated suspicion and bewilderment. Any such relativisation, ambiguity or contradiction seemed for the hard-liners to annul the very spirit of the Orthodox Church, its absolute, clear and perfectly assembled doctrine. On the other hand, any implicitly perceived frailty and vulnerability in the Orthodox vision was seen as diseased, dysfunctional behaviour by those Orthodox involved.

American Orthodox writer Patrick Barnes speaks of an 'ecclesiological schizophrenia' and of a 'double-speak' that some Orthodox participants within the world Council of Churches manifest and he points out that there is a contradiction between the understanding of the Church's traditional ecclesiology, that the Orthodox Church is the One true Church and the understanding of the World Council of Churches as being

³⁸ Nikos Nissiotis, 'The Witness and the Service of Eastern Orthodoxy to the One Undivided Church', in *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: documents and statements 1902-1975* (Geneva: WCC, 1978), p. 237.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 238.

a fellowship of Churches. Hence the Orthodox ecumenists of the Pan-Orthodox Conference in Chambesy in 1986 officially state that:

'The Orthodox Church, however, faithful to her ecclesiology, to the identity of her internal structure and to the teaching of the undivided Church, while participating in the WCC, does not accept the idea of the "equality of confessions" and cannot consider Church unity as an inter-confessional adjustment. In this spirit, the unity which is sought within the WCC cannot simply be the product of theological agreements alone. God calls every Christian to the unity of faith which is lived in the sacraments and the tradition, as experienced in the Orthodox Church.'⁴⁰

But then they add that 'The Orthodox member Churches of the WCC accept its Constitutional Basis, as well as its aims and goals.' The Constitutional Basis, observes Barnes, states that 'The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures.'⁴¹ The acknowledgement of 'Churches' in the plural is perceived as a veiled acceptance of the Branch Theory, which Barnes unequivocally deems a 'heresy'. The Branch Theory states that, though the Church may be divided and its groups or factions may have grown apart to the point of being out of communion with one another, each of these may be seen as a separate 'branch' of the one Church of Christ, as long as it maintains the faith of the undivided Church and maintains the Apostolic Succession of its bishops. This theory, as expected, has been very unpopular with the more radical Orthodox groups.⁴² Barnes is prepared to make some concessions to the context in which these statements are made, but sees them ultimately as a departure from the traditional patristic understanding of Orthodox ecclesiology:

Of course, one could argue that 'church' needs to be defined; it might not mean in this text a 'church' in the sense of a true ecclesial entity in Christ. For example, the 'Report of the Inter-Orthodox Consultation of Orthodox WCC Member Churches at Chambesy (1991)' contains the following statement: 'Nevertheless, membership [in the WCC] does not imply that each church must regard the other member churches as churches in the true and full sense of the word.' Aside from the fact that there is a marked difference between 'church' as a sociological entity with no ecclesial reality – i.e., a mere gathering of like-minded believers in Christ – and 'church' in the 'true and full sense of the word', one searches in vain for a Patristic description of a true 'church' in official documents

40 The Third Preconciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in Chambesy (1986), Section III, Point 6, cited in Patrick Barnes, 'Ecumenist "Double Speak". The Ecclesiological Schizophrenia of the Orthodox Ecumenists', accessed on 11 October 2011, <http://www.Orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/doublespeak.aspx>.

41 Quoted in Barnes, 'Ecumenist "Double Speak"'.⁴¹

42 The 1983 Holy Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR stated that: 'Those who attack the Church of Christ by teaching that Christ's Church is divided into so-called "branches" which differ in doctrine and way of life, or that the Church does not exist visibly, but will be formed in the future when all "branches" or sects or denominations, and even religions will be united into one body; and who do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation; therefore, to those who knowingly have communion with these aforementioned heretics or who advocate, disseminate, or defend their new heresy of Ecumenism under the pretext of brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, Anathema!' Accessed on 17 October 2011, http://www.Orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/ecum_anath.aspx.

issued by Orthodox ecumenists; and in the context of the rest of the 1991 Report and other communiqués, the foregoing superficially Orthodox statement is rendered utterly meaningless. It is yet another example of ecumenist 'double speak.'⁴³

Like many other Orthodox theologians, both moderate and radical, Barnes has no problem in seeing non-Orthodox Churches as mere 'social realities'. For him too this seems the only logical way to reconcile the presence of the *one* Orthodox Church among the *many* other Churches. What he perceives as a logical impossibility, that the one true *ecclesial* Church be present in the midst of many other *ecclesial* realities, can only be a sign of self-deception, an unconscious 'double-thought' on the part of Orthodox ecumenists, a mental aberration akin to schizophrenia. Barnes' language may be sharp, and his conclusions somewhat far-fetched, but he points nevertheless to a real problem posed by Orthodox participation in ecumenical contexts. Representing the 'one, true, catholic and apostolic Church' amidst a variety of other Churches poses at the very least a complex problematic that needs to be seriously addressed, explored and acknowledged. Failure to do that eventually leads to a position that is ultimately 'idle' and insincere. Finding a way out of this paradox may seem next to impossible, while acknowledging it may seem contentious and unpleasant. A more nuanced theological approach though, as maintained in this present study, is likely to bring a clearer, more honest, and ultimately more fruitful participation of the Orthodox in ecumenical encounters.

3.3.2. *Radical positions*

American Harvard-educated scholar and academic and later Orthodox monastic Constantine Cavarnos has devoted a book to the issue of ecumenism – *Ecumenism Examined* – in which he attempted to present systematically arguments against ecumenism, but mostly against the attitude of those Orthodox who participate in ecumenical contexts. His views are so characteristic of a whole strand of Orthodox thought with regard to ecumenism, summarizing most of the anti-ecumenical positions coming from the more radical Orthodox camp, that a brief analysis of his material will be illuminating.

Cavarnos' book presents some of the characteristic positions of the more radical anti-ecumenical group, many of which take the form of conspiracy theories. First there is the conviction that the ecumenical movement has already caused a deep schism within the Orthodox Church, so that some of its hierarchy have engaged, more or less openly, in negotiations with ecumenical bodies, negotiations that are designed to lead

⁴³ Barnes, 'Ecumenist "Double Speak"'.

eventually to a union of the Orthodox with the 'heterodox', so leading to a dissolution of the Orthodox Church. The introduction of the 'new' Gregorian calendar in 1923 in some Orthodox countries is seen as a visible sign of this schism. The belief is that this innovation has divided the Orthodox world into two mutually hostile parties. 'Initially this division appeared among the Greeks. Then it spread to the Orthodox peoples of Rumania (sic) and Bulgaria. They all remain to this day divided. Thus we have a clear instance of Orthodox Ecumenism as a divisive movement among the Orthodox.'⁴⁴ This division may not, in most of these countries, have the day-to-day impact implied by Cavarnos, as the old calendar factions remain very small minorities. But this 'political' compromise is seen to have also important spiritual implications. The Orthodox Church has been split 'not only into "old-calendarists" and "new-calendarists", in "ecumenists" and "anti-ecumenists", but also separated "the *sheep* from the *goats*"'⁴⁵ the *believers* from the *unbelievers* – persons of little faith who only pretend to be believers.⁴⁶

Cavarnos is also eager to note that Orthodox ecumenists are 'latinizers' steering the Church towards a union that 'will consist in yielding to the pressures of the Papacy to accept its dogmas of the primacy of the Pope, his infallibility etc.'⁴⁷ This takes us to the second major fantasy of the radical anti-ecumenical group, which often sees the Catholic element as pivotal in all the alleged ecumenical 'machinations' against the Orthodox Church. Such a revelation commonly comes as a surprise to anyone involved in ecumenical contexts, since Catholic participation is far from being substantial – especially in ecumenical institutions – because, ironically, the Catholic Church itself generally rejects ecumenical participation for reasons not very different from those of the Orthodox. This highly suspicious and inadequately supported view towards a Catholic conspiracy might have something to do with the legacy of the Councils of Lyons and Florence (1274 and 1439), when the Orthodox felt they were being manoeuvred into dishonest agreements, a final great humiliation before their tragic fall under the Turkish occupation. It is a bitterness and a distrust that the many centuries have not managed fully to heal.

The artisans of such a conspiracy are, in Cavarnos' view, again echoing a whole school of radical thought, the Patriarchate of Constantinople itself, the historic and symbolic

44 Constantine Cavarnos, *Ecumenism examined* (Belmont: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1996), p. 33.

45 Photios Kontoglou in a letter to Metropolitan Iakovos of Derkon, cited in Cavarnos, *Ecumenism Examined*, p. 38.

46 Cavarnos, *Ecumenism examined*, p. 39.

47 Ibid., pp. 59-60.

centre of the Orthodox world, with Patriarch Meletios and Patriarch Athenagoras as the main culprits. Thus it was supposedly Patriarch Meletios who 'through his manoeuvring', introduced the 'Papal' calendar into the Orthodox Church, causing a serious division, while Patriarch Athenagoras is accused of introducing a 'relativism' with regard to the dogmas and canons of the Orthodox Church, and asides of his such as 'Let the Dogmas be placed in the storeroom' or 'Theology equals love' are cited as proof of that relativism.⁴⁸

Another defining view of the Orthodox anti-ecumenists, as exemplified by Cavarnos' book, is their approach to *ecumenical dialogue*: a view which again might surprise most participants in ecumenical encounters. For these participants, dialogue and the sharing of views and ideas in ecumenical milieux is the simplest and 'safest' mode of engagement and is, so to speak, the least one can get away with in ecumenical contexts. If discussions about the visible unity of the Churches, the decision-making debates or theological discussions on delicate bio-ethical topics of the day are felt to be involved and 'risky' by some participants, there is always the option of dialogue, of simply sharing one's views or thoughts with the others, without a formal commitment of any kind. But according to the radical groups, dialogue in itself is a great evil and a perilous compromise. Thus ecumenical dialogues make the '*spiritual immune system*, which protects one from the virus of heresy, become progressively weaker [...] The sufferer from 'spiritual AIDS' becomes completely insensitive to doctrinal differences that distinguish Orthodoxy or true belief, from heresy or false belief.'⁴⁹

Such a stance – whether assumed to a lesser or greater degree, whether implicitly or plainly stated – that non-Orthodox Christians are necessarily 'heretics' can be argued to discredit any supposedly 'rational' argument the anti-ecumenists may pose against ecumenism. To label someone a 'heretic' does not only suggest disagreement on theological or doctrinal matters, or indicate that the person so categorized has gone outside the borders of the Church: it defines him/her also as an 'enemy', a devious adversary whose purpose is to continuously threaten the integrity of faith and truth. According to this logic, there is no way to respond to this sort of violence but with similar counteracting violence. When fellow Christians and human beings are labelled as 'heretics' – and thus presented as an amorphous and malignant mass, threatening the truth of faith and the salvation of all the 'righteous' – they cease to become our 'neighbours', our fellow Christians; they cease, moreover, to become human persons,

48 Ibid., pp 36-37.

49 Ibid., p. 54.

so that any form of compassionate, brotherly or humane approach is precluded. This is a 'legitimized' instance whereby theology ceases, so to speak, to be pastoral. Compassion, understanding, assistance, forgiveness – otherwise central attributes of Christian life – become meaningless and cease to apply in what are perceived as times of war.

It follows thus, rationally, that radicalists find it appropriate, when confronted with what they feel are outside threats to the integrity of their Church's faith, to employ once again the strong anathemizing language of the Ecumenical Synods in order to safeguard the fullness of the faith, as was the necessity centuries ago. And this coheres neatly within the logic of many Orthodox believers that this constitutes precisely the identity, nature and mission of the Orthodox Church, the Church that has remained 'right' (*orthos*) by fiercely opposing all the separations, deviations and attacks throughout history. One consequence of this type of logic, which identifies Orthodoxy with a constant 'defence' against various heresies and a safeguarding of the true faith in spite of efforts from 'adverse forces', is that some Orthodox find it increasingly hard to define themselves as Orthodox without reference to such adverse forces, whether they be real or not. This might explain the ease with which the term 'heretical' is transferred from its historical context into the present-day, with applicability this time not to a group of people, not to a trend of thought, but to the entirety of non-Orthodox Christian world.

If Orthodoxy was once a defining stance in opposition to the heresies of the early centuries, this aspect giving it a particular dynamic of witness, one of uncompromising, rigorous defence of the faith, of confessing the 'pure' unchanged Christian truth, of denouncing the errors which threatened the integrity of doctrine, it may still be felt by some Orthodox that the situation is the same many centuries later – and this precisely as a way to preserve the energy of those early centuries, when Orthodoxy is felt to have been stronger, and to be empowered to define Orthodoxy in the same terms. A change in the reality of the Christian world might be perceived to alter the traditional dynamics of the Orthodox Church, as it would then need to adapt to a new context and thus change its core paradigm. A disappearance of heresies might also diminish the need for proclamation of the Orthodoxy of faith. A lack of fundamental errors might not justify any longer the need for an emphasis on correctness. Thus a change of context is perceived as a fundamental threat to Orthodox identity, an identity that was forged in times of battle, and cannot find its sense and purpose in times of peace.

3.4. Non-Orthodox errors – *The Thyateira Confession*

A generalised Orthodox view so far is that re-unification of the Church can only happen within the perimeter of the Orthodox Church, of Orthodoxy, as inheritance and continuing experience of the truth of faith and of the fullness of life with and in Christ. In other words, it is believed, that what has led other Christians away from the fullness of life within the one Church, and what still keeps them at a relative distance, is the incomplete character of their faith, a certain loss of fidelity in their inheritance of Christ's truth. Orthodoxy, it is claimed, as a full, complete and coherent set of beliefs as well as a way of life, and not simply as jurisdictional adherence, would make these Christians 'whole' again, would bring them back within the sphere of Orthodoxy, would re-unite them with the original, one, true Church. What are the aspects however, that the Orthodox claim have been lost in the other Christian traditions? And what needs to be regained for Orthodoxy to be restored?

As was mentioned already, the Russian theologian Philip Ryabikh, describes 'the totality of criteria to be met by a true Church of Christ by employing his proposed term '*Orthodoxia*'.⁵⁰ Referring to the document 'Basic Principles of Attitude towards the Non-Orthodox' elaborated by the Russian Orthodox Church, Ryabikh points to a number of criteria which have been identified as 'included in the notion of Orthodoxy': "Orthodoxy is an inner quality of the Church. It is the preservation of the doctrinal truth, the liturgical and hierarchical order and the principles of spiritual life which, unchangingly and uninterruptedly, have been present in the Church since apostolic times"⁵¹ To accept such criteria of *Orthodoxia*, Ryabikh emphasises, does not mean 'the acceptance of particular cultural forms in Church life as they have been developed in the Eastern Christian Tradition.'⁵²

This is not an area that has been often tackled or expounded systematically by Orthodox writers. They seem to have become content to operate on an intuitive, implicit level, simply hinting at the fact that those outside Orthodoxy are by this mere outsideness cut off, to a lesser or greater degree, from the fullness of experience and faith. Orthodox catechisms and confessions of faith are not numerous, this reflecting, perhaps, the inborn Orthodox reluctance to systematize what is otherwise and eminently an area of mystery and sacrament. 'The faithful of the Orthodox Church',

⁵⁰ Ryabikh, 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Ecumenism', p. 356.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

wrote Staniloae, 'have not received the general teaching of the Church from catechisms and doctrinal discourses, but mostly from worship, from the sacramental practice of the mystery of salvation.'⁵³ Those confessions that have been written do not tackle Western deviations from Orthodoxy in any particular detail. For instance, the official catechism on the website of the Russian Orthodox Church states that:

Orthodoxy does not concur with the 'branch theory', according to which all the existing Christian denominations are branches of the one tree[...] Does this necessarily mean that the Orthodox should regard all non-Orthodox Christian confessions as heretical gatherings or withered branches cut off from the trunk? ... The early Church took a strict line with heretics: the church canons not only forbid them from taking part in the Eucharist, but also forbid people from praying with heretics. However, we must remember that the heresies of the first Christian centuries ... rejected the very foundations of the Christian faith [...] This cannot be said of the majority of today's Christian confessions for they accept the basic dogmas of the Church.⁵⁴

Concluding that, with regard to Christian divisions, 'the Orthodox may wish to bear in mind that God alone knows where the limits of the Church are', this Russian catechism shows laudable moderation and openness, but makes no further mention of the actual differences between the Orthodox and the rest of the Christian world. While it hints at the tendency to simply categorise these other confessions as mere heresies – a tendency it clearly rejects – it does emphasize, nevertheless, the need for 'one tree' and rejects the branch theory. A very necessary point is made that today's non-Orthodox confessions do not reject the 'basic dogmas of the Church', the 'very foundations of Christian faith', and this transposes discussion to a plane very different from any discussion of the ancient heresies of the Church.

A confession of faith somewhat similar in ethos but considering Orthodox-non-Orthodox divergences in more detail, happens to be also a somewhat controversial document in the Orthodox world. The Thyateira Confession published by Greek Metropolitan Athenagoras Kokkinakis of Thyateira and Great Britain in 1975 has been criticized for the generosity with which it refers to other Christian traditions – though its views were not much different from the more contemporary ones presented above in the Russian catechism. In his much circulated 'Third Sorrowful Epistle', nowadays ubiquitous on the internet, Metropolitan Philaret of the ROCOR observed in 1975 that:

Metropolitan Athenagoras is ready to acknowledge this [heresy] with regard to such ancient heretics as the Arians, but when speaking about his contemporaries he does not wish to take their heresy into consideration. And with regard to them he calls us to be

⁵³ Dumitru Staniloae, 'Câteva trăsături caracteristice ale Ortodoxiei' ('A few characteristic features of Orthodoxy'), in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, 1970, No. 7-8, pp. 730-738. My translation.

⁵⁴ 'An Online Orthodox Catechism' on the website of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate; accessed on 20 March 2013, <http://Orthodoxeurope.org/page/10/1.aspx#40>.

guided not by ancient tradition and canons, but by the “new understanding which prevails today among Christians” (p. 12) and by “the signs of our time”⁵⁵

As Metropolitan Philaret acknowledges, however, the author of the Thyateira Confession does write, ‘with full justification that Orthodox Christians believe that their Church is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and transmits the fullness of Catholic truth’ and that he ‘likewise acknowledges that the other confessions have not preserved this fullness’.⁵⁶ It is just that the author ‘later forgets that if any teaching departs in any respect from the truth, by this very fact it is false.’⁵⁷ Metropolitan Philaret’s view here is not uncommon in the Orthodox world, namely that non-Orthodox Christians are to be considered heretical, as what they teach is different in one or several aspects and is therefore false. One can already see in this disagreement the tension in the Orthodox world with regard to the other confessions, between considering them as plainly heretical – and thus in some form a contravention of the ancient canons of the ecumenical councils – and seeing them as post-ecumenical-councils realities, with a different historical background, but which have maintained to a degree a ‘grain’ of Orthodoxy.

Metropolitan Athenagoras clearly favoured the latter view, but went nonetheless to some trouble systematically to enumerate the instances where the other (non-Orthodox) Churches had failed to keep the fullness of the Church, and with a candour and diligence not necessarily appreciated by those who perceived in his writing too much ecumenical largesse. Despite it being somewhat dated, the Thyateira Confession addresses the same perceived errors as might be identified today by most Orthodox, and is therefore of particular value for this study. The Thyateira Confession identifies four areas where the non-Orthodox Churches have departed from original Orthodoxy: *loss and neglect of the Holy Tradition, interruption of Apostolic continuation, denying honour to saints, the purely scholarly interpretation of the Bible.*

3.4.1. *Loss and Neglect of the Holy Tradition*

The first rather vast area is represented by the denial of the ‘integral unity of the source of Christian Revelation as it is formed or composed by its written documents and unwritten holiness in the experience of the People of God.’⁵⁸ This aspect is seen as

55 “The Thyateira Confession”, or Third Sorrowful Epistle’, by Metropolitan Philaret, accessed on 2 April 2013, <http://Orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/sorrow3.aspx>.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Athenagoras T. Kokkinakis, *The Thyateira Confession: The faith and prayer of Orthodox Christians* (London: Faith Press, 1975), p.62.

encapsulating most of the essential changes in the original order of the Church, though it hints mainly at what it perceives to be 'the Supreme authority' given 'only to the written revelation, that is the Bible, while regarding Holy Tradition, or the unwritten source of Christianity as being unimportant, and unworthy of attention.'⁵⁹ Thus the Holy Tradition, which may or may not contain written witness, refers to the accumulating inheritance of the life of the Church throughout decades and centuries, but not merely as a growing 'static' body, but as a developing way of life, whereby the previous wisdom and experience of the preceding generations ever and unceasingly informs the life of the Church. This living inheritance contains, besides texts, also rituals, customs, attitudes, beliefs, art etc. It is seen by the Orthodox as an all-encompassing domain, also including in fact within its scope the Holy Scriptures themselves, which are seen not outside the tradition but as part of it, as it was still the community of the Church which selected and validated its contents. The implications are thus wider:

Holy Tradition was rejected, but from this sacred source emanate the Christian Priesthood, the Apostolic Succession, the Seven Sacraments, the Authority of the Ecumenical Councils, the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the honour of the Saints and their relics and icons, the customs of liturgical worship, the Sign of the Cross, Fasting and all the other aspects of Christian piety from the birth of Christianity until today.⁶⁰

This already launches the Thyateira Confession into the complex problematics of non-Orthodoxy, as it identifies a number of breaches in the inheritance, referring mostly to the Protestant Churches, as the Confession acknowledges: the loss of the central importance attributed to the Holy Theotokos and the saints, of the Ecumenical Councils, the rejection of important parts of ritual and faith, the use of relics and icons, the sign of the cross, but also the order of the Liturgy in more general terms, and also aspects of Christian life, like fasting, the loss of which marred the integrity of Church life. Here one encounters the so-called 'holistic' vision for which the Orthodox are notorious: the author speaks in the same phrase about history, the Bible, liturgical life, and cultural elements, as though they are inextricably connected – and in the Orthodox view it can be argued that indeed they are. This, however, makes it extremely hard to isolate any one particular aspect which may have changed in the other traditions, as there is no 'core' belief, with a range of adjacent related elements, but the truth of faith seen as a complex whole that cannot be dismantled. This exposes already one of the main aspects of the problem of what is perceived as 'heterodoxy'.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

However, mention is made also of another aspect that may well constitute the 'heart' of the problem: the view of the Sacraments. This is seen by the Orthodox as a general problem in the West, common to Catholics, Anglicans and Protestants alike, and it starts from a simple premise: if you cannot find in one particular system the exact functioning sacraments as those performed in the Orthodox Church, then the whole system is deemed defective. The Orthodox Church generally recognises seven sacraments or mysteries:⁶¹ Eucharist, Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, Marriage, Holy Orders (Ordination) and Holy Unction (Anointing of the Sick). Orthodox Theologians often refer to the Eucharist as the 'Sacrament of Sacraments', and to a degree treat the other mysteries as complementary to the Eucharist.⁶² They also make reference to other 'sacraments' or 'mysteries' like 'the sacrament of the brother', wherein one can mysteriously meet Christ in the other – as was mentioned earlier in this study. The centrality of the Eucharist is duly reflected in the Thyateira Confession, and attracts most of the space allotted to non-Orthodox deviations. However, before tackling the central issue of the sacrament of the Eucharist, this study will enumerate, very briefly, some of the other main issues identified as 'errors' of the non-Orthodox Churches. It is not the purpose of this study to analyse each of these aspects in any depth, as this would not be of particular relevance, but to present a general overview of the factors involved in the argument.

To start with, the Thyateira Confession refers to the fact that the Sacrament of Chrismation is performed in the Catholic context – though 'a similar separation of Baptism and Confirmation is also customary in the Anglican Church'⁶³ – eight or ten years after Baptism, which 'has not always been the practice of the Church.'⁶⁴ When referring to the Catholics, the Confession also mentions the problem of Purgatory, a theory not accepted by the Orthodox and considered a dangerous innovation in the doctrine of the Church.⁶⁵ Also, the belief that the Virgin Mary was born without the stigma or guilt of original sin is also perilous, as 'before Christ's coming, according to

61 According to: *A pastoral guide to the Holy Mysteries*, The British Antiochian Orthodox Deanery (Cambridge: Aquila Books, 2001), p. 7; Andrew Louth, *Eastern Orthodox Theology* (London: SPCK, 2013), pp. 103-105; Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic. A Concise Exposition* (Platina: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1994), p. 263; Anthony Coniaris, *Introducing the Orthodox Church* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing, 1982), p. 124. However, according to Coniaris: 'To place a limitation on the number of Sacraments is to view them from a very narrow perspective. If a sacrament happens whenever God's grace is mediated to man through matter, then there is no limit to the number of Sacraments.' Similarly, although they mention the seven 'conventional' Sacraments, both Louth and Pomazansky expressed reservations regarding an established or limited number of Sacraments.

62 See Thomas FitzGerald's article, 'The Sacraments', on the website of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, accessed on 2 April 2013, <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7105>.

63 Kokkinakis, *The Thyateira Confession*, p. 63.

64 Kokkinakis, *The Thyateira Confession*, p. 62.

65 Ibid., p. 64.

the Bible, none was born free of guilt and sin.’⁶⁶ This view, it is believed, may potentially ‘lessen’ the perception of the saving mission of Christ, who came to save all. Metropolitan Athenagoras concludes the list of Catholic problems with the question of the primacy of the Pope.⁶⁷ Orthodox theologians have a problem with one of the Apostles’ successors assuming a leadership role, as this contradicts the ‘conciliar’ nature and ethos of the Church.⁶⁸ The closest equivalent to the Pope in the Orthodox world, the Patriarch of Constantinople, has a certain honorific authority, but he is seen as ‘the first among equals’ and cannot exercise any real influence on the other Orthodox hierarchs – even less so perhaps in recent decades.

3.4.2. *Interruption of Apostolic Continuation*

One other very important issue as cited often by the Orthodox and expounded in the Thyateira Confession is the absolute necessity of Apostolic succession in the Church. This is important not simply because of the idea that ‘a canonical Bishop embodies the authority of Christ and is instrumental for the catholicity of his diocese’,⁶⁹ or because the continuity of Church hierarchy goes back to Christ himself.⁷⁰ It is chiefly important – as will be also shown later in this chapter when addressing the Russian Orthodox Church document on the ‘Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox’ – because it secures a foundation for a valid sacramental life within the Church. Thus:

Orthodox people believe that ordinations not performed by canonically elected and consecrated Bishops are not true and legitimate, and consequently those who are ordained by them are not true Bishops, Priests and Deacons and the Sacraments they perform are not valid and true Christian Sacraments.⁷¹

Not many of the Christian Churches, however, are perceived as having an unbroken succession, and therefore possessing a valid priesthood.⁷² This particular emphasis draws attention to the sacrament of ordination having a very special place in the theology of the Orthodox Church, since, without it being fully valid, the whole sacramental life – including the administration of the Eucharist – is fundamentally flawed.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 66.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See, as an example, Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, p. 64.

⁶⁹ Kokkinakis, *The Thyateira Confession*, p. 60.

⁷⁰ ‘Orthodox people believe that the Bishops are linked with the Apostles and the Apostles are linked with Christ. This link is called the Apostolic Succession.’ In Kokkinakis, *The Thyateira Confession*, p. 61.

⁷¹ Kokkinakis, *The Thyateira Confession*, p. 61.

⁷² ‘Orthodox Christians believe that the following Churches have valid and true Priesthood or Orders: The Orthodox, the Roman Catholic, the Ethiopian, the Copto-Armenian and the Anglican’ – writes Kokkinakis; although ‘there are still differences of opinion among Orthodox people in regard to Anglican Orders.’ In Kokkinakis, *The Thyateira Confession*, p. 61.

3.4.3. *Denying Honour to Saints*

Loss of the complex universe of tradition brings a whole multitude of problems, as is seen above. Central among these is the loss of honour accorded to the Saints. The Thyateira Confession revisits this issue later on in its section on 'denying honour to saints', although this veneration has already been deemed a constituent element of Holy Tradition. That Kokkinakis approached this aspect again in a dedicated section reveals the importance for the Orthodox of this reality – and the dislike that this tradition should have been abandoned. It has implications for the way Orthodox perceive the community and even the unity of the Church, not only as a synchronic reality, seen in one particular historical age, but as a diachronic reality, encompassing all time and history. Moreover, saints, as 'living' examples of humans who have achieved deification, place us, as their fellow-Church-companions, in a closer, more familiar connection with Christ. Paraphrasing Paul in Ephesians 2:19,⁷³ Florovsky wrote that, when joining the Church one becomes a 'co-citizen of the saints and ever with God', one 'enters an order of grace.'⁷⁴ Interestingly, Florovsky also emphasised the ecumenical nature of the Church as expressed 'by the feature of its "all-timeness" (of its running through all times). For believers of all ages and all generations, who are alive now, who lived, and who will be born, belong to it in the same way.'⁷⁵

3.4.4. *The Purely Scholarly Interpretation of The Bible*

As it has already been mentioned, the main identified offence of the Protestant world is its neglect of Holy Tradition and its separation, and marginalisation of Tradition, from the Holy Scriptures. The *Sola Scriptura* tendency is seen as dangerous since, by turning to the Scriptures as ultimate source and ignoring other contributions of the Church community it conflicts with the fundamental perception the Orthodox have of theology. In the words of the current Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, theology 'is the fruit of a communal conscience and consensus. Theology can never be understood as some infallible proclamation by a single or even a collective source. It always derives from, is produced by, and is interpreted within the experience of the total community.'⁷⁶

⁷³ 'So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God' (Ephesians 2:19).

⁷⁴ Georges Florovsky, 'On the Veneration of the Saints', on the *Orthodox Christian Information Centre* website. Accessed on 15 April 2012, http://Orthodoxinfo.com/general/florov_veneration.aspx.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch, *Encountering the Mystery. Understanding Orthodox Christianity today* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), p. 37.

The Thyateira Confession explicitly expresses the Orthodox distaste for an overly scholarly interpretation of the Bible – ‘in a way that is productive of doubts as to its integrity and authenticity.’⁷⁷ The analysis of the Scriptures as stand-alone interpretable texts, and not as an integral part of the Holy Tradition, within which they first appeared, an analysis performed in isolation from the rest of the inheritance of the Church community is generally perceived as a risky and pointless enterprise. In other words, from an Orthodox point of view, the only interpretation of the Scriptures that is of worth to the Church is the theological, mystical one – an approach thwarted by an overly objective and ‘clinical’ scholarly approach. This accounts for the paucity of Biblical scholarship in the Orthodox world.

3.4.5. *The Sacrament of the Eucharist*

A special place is granted by the Orthodox in their relationship with other Christians to the question of the Eucharist which exposes the basic rupture in Orthodox-non-Orthodox relations. There indeed cannot be a more visible symbol of the lack of unity between Christians than the lack of inter-communion between their communities. The Orthodox exclusion of the non-Orthodox from the Eucharistic communion is probably the most infamous of such instances, due to the numerous awkward liturgical encounters occasioned within ecumenical contexts.

In the case of Catholic theology, according to the Thyateira Confession, the problem springs from the concept of ‘transubstantiation’, a term ‘taken from Scholastic Philosophy’⁷⁸ which ‘indicates that in every material object there are two things: the essence and the accidents. The essence of an object is not visible while the accidents are the characteristics which are visible.’⁷⁹ This concept, as explained by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ‘aims at safeguarding the literal truth of Christ’s Presence while emphasizing the fact that there is no change in the empirical appearances of the bread and wine.’⁸⁰ The Thyateira Confession asks, in reference to the transubstantiation theory:

When in the Eucharist it is said that only the essence is changed, the characteristics remaining unaffected, what then is the result? Is there not a danger of equating Christ with an abstract meaning and not with a reality, for the real things are the characteristics

⁷⁷ Kokkinakis, *The Thyateira Confession*, p. 60.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 62-63.

⁸⁰ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed on 10 April 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/603196/transubstantiation>.

that exist and these are said to remain unchanged while the non-existing essence alone is changed.⁸¹

The Thyateira Confession suggests that the 'transubstantiation theory' introduced by philosophy-imbued theologians and scholars has become the foundation of the difference concerning the Holy Eucharist between Eastern and Western Christians.⁸² This may express a more general perception by the Orthodox, that when 'essential' differences occurred in the understanding of the Eucharist – seen as the very pivot of all life, experience and worship within the Church – this marred not only the theology of the Church, its sacramental life as a whole, but the whole 'culture' and way of thinking of the West. An Orthodox theologian particularly vocal and critical with regard to what he perceived as a theological and cultural paradigm change in the West was Staniloae. Alluding to the understanding of 'visible means' as opposed to the presence of Christ 'in the sensible reality of the Church',⁸³ Staniloae writes in no uncertain terms that:

The Church gives the Sacraments a very important place in the economy of salvation, as those means through which the union of humans with Christ is achieved. It is in this that Protestantism is different, as it sees the word about Christ as sufficient almost for humans to decide to believe that Christ effected our salvation through His death, and thus, through this belief, to benefit personally from this salvation. Distrust in the potentiality of Christ's union with humans, and consequently in the importance of Sacraments, was inherited by Protestantism from Catholicism, which had started to see in Sacraments only a visible means through which is bestowed an equivalent of the merit achieved by Christ through His death, in the form of a created grace, deposited and administered by the Church.⁸⁴

The Orthodox prefer to treat Christ's *real* presence in the Eucharist as a *mystery*, without attempting to postulate any philosophical or theological theory that would explain how Christ can be *really* and *fully* present in the elements of the Holy Gifts without their visual appearance being changed. Orthodox insistence on the 'transfigured' mystical reality of the Liturgy sets the atmosphere for such paradoxes to occur 'naturally'. The attempt to theorize rationally about such a fundamentally mysterious event is seen as a grave and fundamental offence. The fact that it lies at the very heart of Orthodox sacramental life, and, ultimately, of *all* life within the Church leaves little room for conciliation on this particular point – despite it being ultimately a matter of 'philosophical' interpretation. It is, as in Staniloae's words above, seen as evidence of distrust in Christ's power and in the importance of the sacraments.

81 Kokkinakis, *The Thyateira Confession*, p. 63.

82 See *The Thyateira Confession*, p. 64.

83 Staniloae, *Teologie dogmatica Ortodoxa*, vol. III. (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic si de Misiune, 2003), p. 14. My translation.

84 Ibid., p. 7

According to Kokkinakis, while the Anglicans 'seem to reject the theory of transubstantiation,' they do nevertheless emphasise their faith in the 'real presence of Christ' in the Eucharistic bread and wine.' This view is not entirely acceptable to the Orthodox, because if Christ coexists in the bread and wine, this means 'that Christ is present [in them] as He is present everywhere. Christ is not solely present in the Eucharistic Bread but rather the Bread is changed into the Theandric Christ.' 'It is evident, however', concludes Kokkinakis, 'that "The Real Presence" concept is an effort of Theologians to approach and explain the Mystery'⁸⁵ – an endeavour which, to the Orthodox with their mystical understanding of theology, seems forever doomed.

3.5. 'Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox'

Orthodox Churches very rarely have taken the risk of issuing official statements with regard to their position vis-à-vis ecumenism and relations with the other Christian Churches. This has remained very much a field wherein Orthodox theologians and scholars expressed their positions and understandings, without their views being either sanctioned or contradicted by their local Churches. Thus, when the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church adopted in August 2000 the document entitled 'Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox' it had a great impact on the ecumenical circles of the time, and it still can be considered a seminal document within these contexts. This official Church statement bore all the more weight as it came from the largest Orthodox Church, and one that had been particularly active and influential in the ecumenical context at the beginning of the 2000s – particularly immediately before and during the work of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. After criticism from the Orthodox Churches toward the WCC had reached a peak at the meeting of Eastern Orthodox Churches in May, 1998, in Thessaloniki, the eighth WCC Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe (December 1998) was pushed into setting up a Special Commission on the participation of Orthodox Churches in the WCC – a body with equal participation from the Orthodox Churches and the other member Churches. The Russian document followed both the Thessaloniki meeting and the WCC General Assembly of Harare. These were special times indeed for Orthodox participation within ecumenical forums.

Not without importance also is the fact that the Basic Principles appears as a competently and thoroughly elaborated document, structured in 7 sections each with

⁸⁵ Kokkinakis, *The Thyateira Confession*, p. 71.

many detailed subsections. It is a document of careful and subtle theological reflection and genuine commitment – sufficient indeed for it to transcend the sphere of chiefly ‘political’ Church statements. There is little doubt it heavily reflects the findings of the Department for Church External Relations – with Oxford-educated scholar and hierarch Hilarion Alfeyev at its helm – and its ecumenical experience of previous years.

The document starts by addressing ‘the unity of the Church and the sin of human divisions’, and it affirms that ‘the Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ established by our Lord and Saviour Himself’, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. It also defines the Church as ‘keeper and provider of the Holy Sacraments throughout the world’ which ‘bears full responsibility for the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s gospel, as well as the full power to witness to the faith.’⁸⁶ Church unity is seen as ‘the unity of a new humanity in Christ’, overcoming ‘all barriers and frontiers, including racial, linguistic and social differences’, it is ‘above every human and earthly union, for it has been given above as a perfect and divine gift.’ ‘In the Church, enmity and alienation are overcome, and humanity, divided by sin, is united in love in the image of the consubstantial Trinity.’⁸⁷

Many important aspects are adumbrated already in this introductory section: Christian division is seen as human sin in relation to which the Orthodox Church bears an enormous and ‘full’ responsibility to witness the message of salvation, which is to be ‘proclaimed to all nations in order to bring them into one fold, to unite them by the power of faith and grace of the Holy Spirit.’⁸⁸ This places the Principles from the outset on a plane of humble reflection, since the obstacle preventing Church unity is ‘human sin’ and not the sin of heretics – it is a sinful condition that faces humanity as a whole. The document also introduces the Orthodox Church as an eminently ‘responsible’ Church, a Church with a tremendous mission and witness. It is not a ‘static’ Church, content with its inheritance, not simply a ‘keeper’ of truth in wait for others to return, but a Church of action whose accountability is of the highest order, as on its mission rests the salvation of the whole of humankind. Indeed, the Church is the ‘keeper and provider of the Holy Sacraments throughout the world’ – a statement which, although putting forward a common Orthodox thesis that the Orthodox Church has been the only one to preserve sacramental life, implies the huge responsibility of ‘providing’ a sacramental dimension to the whole world.

⁸⁶ ‘Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox’, para. 1.1.

⁸⁷ Ibid., para 1.3-1.5.

⁸⁸ Ibid., para 1.4.

Moreover, as will be evident from the second section of the Principles, unity of the Church takes a very special place within this missionary responsibility as it 'is a part of God's design and belongs to the very essence of Christianity. It is a task of the highest priority for the Orthodox Church at every level of her life. Indifference to this task is a sin against God's commandment of unity.'⁸⁹

Unsurprisingly, 'Church unity is bound up inseparably with the Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which the faithful, partaking of the one Body of Christ, are really and truly joined in the one and catholic Body, in the mystery of Christ's love, in the transforming power of the Spirit.'⁹⁰ True and real unity and catholicity require the real and visible act of communion, a vision which the Orthodox have brought continuously into ecumenical conversations. The Eucharist is seen as *the* centre par excellence – of Church sacramental life, of the Church's organic unity, but also of cosmic, universal, catholic unity: an ultimate icon of the unity of all Christian humanity.

The Apostolic character of the Church appears further on not only as an essential character of Orthodoxy, but also of the unity of the Church. 'The apostolic succession of the hierarchy, beginning from the holy apostles is the basis of the communion and unity of grace-filled life. Any deviation from the lawful Church authority is a deviation from the Holy Spirit, from Christ Himself.'⁹¹ This unity of succession is closely connected, however, with the unity of the Eucharist and sacramental life, as 'through the divinely instituted priesthood the gifts of the Holy Spirit are communicated to the faithful.'⁹² This is an extremely important aspect, since it emphasises the fundamental importance of the Orthodox position on the sacrament of ordination. This is again a central sacrament of the Church, since on it rests the entirety of sacramental life – including the Eucharist. Since the bishop or priest is the 'administrator' of the Eucharist and of all the other sacraments, it follows logically that sacramental life could not exist without the ordained orders. It is not thus merely continuation that is sought through the apostolic succession, but the assurance of the very foundation of sacramental life, and thus of the very condition of the existence of the Church. Both these aspects are essential prerequisites for Church unity.

Excommunication from the Church (which the Basic Principles document addresses early on, following an interesting internal logic, and beginning thus to hint at the lack of unity) was, in the understanding of the early Church, 'exclusion from the Eucharistic

⁸⁹ Ibid., para 2.1.

⁹⁰ Ibid., para 1.8.

⁹¹ Ibid., para 1.9.

⁹² Ibid.

assembly'.⁹³ 'Those excommunicated, however, were never re-admitted to Church communion through re-baptism', the official statement continues, citing the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan creed: 'I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.'⁹⁴

Re-baptism of those joining the Orthodox Church has always been a point of contention, being often, though not always, a first prerequisite for non-Orthodox catechumens to Orthodoxy, and thus placing their previous background totally outside the Church. This direct emphasis on baptism is somewhat unexpected in this kind of policy-defining document and particularly in the context of the discussion on unity. Later on, the statement returns to the issue of baptism and clarifies that a variety of rites of reception are in fact employed by the Orthodox – baptism, chrismation, repentance – the criterion being 'the degree to which the faith and order of the Church, as well as the norms of Christian spiritual life, are preserved in a particular confession.'⁹⁵ How that is achieved, however, remains slightly unclear, as 'the Orthodox Church does not assess the extent to which grace-filled life has either been preserved intact or distorted in a non-Orthodox confession. This is considered to be a mystery of God's providence and judgement.'⁹⁶

The stress on the unitary character of baptism, however, leads the reflections of the document in a further direction:

In this way the Church bore witness that those who have been excommunicated retain a certain "seal" of belonging to the people of God. By accepting them back the Church brings back to life those who have already been baptized by the spirit into the one body. Even while excommunicating one of her members, sealed by her on the day of his baptism, the Church hopes for his return. She considers excommunication itself to be a means of spiritual rebirth for such person.⁹⁷

It is quite clear in this particular context that the document thus refers to the Christians 'who have separated themselves from the Church', their 'self-imposed' exclusion from the unifying centrality of the Eucharist equating with an instance of excommunication.⁹⁸ However, when the Orthodox Church is forced to recognize such (self) excommunication, it neither considers the estranged ones as fully cut off from the body of the Church, nor does it lose sight of them completely. On the contrary it does acknowledge their excommunication as a 'pedagogical' device, not only because it still hopes for the return of those excommunicated, but because the act of the

⁹³ Ibid., para 1.10.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., para 1.17.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., para 1.11.

⁹⁸ Ibid., para 1.16.

excommunication itself has as a purpose the 'correction', improvement and rebirth of the trespasser.

This vision has a particular importance for this study, as it has several revealing implications. First, it expresses the understanding that other confessions inherently maintain a degree of Orthodoxy, the "'seal" of belonging to the people of God', and thus their re-baptism becomes questionable. Secondly, if the Orthodox Church considers those who have failed to keep the fullness of Christ's truth as 'outside' the Church, it ultimately does so precisely to make them aware of the seriousness of their error and to determine them to come back. The act of excommunication does not wish the exclusion of the 'offenders', but on the contrary it wishes to bring the offenders closer to the bosom of the Church, after they have duly learnt and repented of their errors. This casts a new light on the self-understanding of the Orthodox. If the Orthodox define themselves as 'right worshippers' in implied opposition to those who have become the 'wrong worshippers'; and if – since the fundamental claim is that the Orthodox have maintained the one true Church – the implication clearly is to differentiate between 'those who are inside' and 'those who are outside' the Church, does this not mean ultimately that by this very delimitation the Church wishes to bring those who are in error back into the folds of the Church?

This view accords with the essential responsibility which the Basic Principles document has identified in the mission of the Orthodox Church. The document makes reference later on to 'the responsibility of the Orthodox Church, as well as her ecumenical mission regarding Church unity.'⁹⁹ If the unity of the Church – 'above every human and earthly unity'¹⁰⁰ – is its quintessential quality and is to be brought to all nations, then the dichotomy 'Orthodoxy'-'heterodoxy' has as its very goal the reunification of the Church. Orthodoxy could itself be thus seen as paradigm, structure and route to unity, and achieving the unity of the Church could be conceived as its very *raison d'être*.

Going back to the way heterodoxy is understood in the document of the Russian Orthodox Church: While the authors point out that 'the Orthodox Church ... affirms that salvation can be attained only in the Church of Christ', they nevertheless add that 'communities which have fallen away from Orthodoxy have never been viewed as fully deprived of the grace of God.'¹⁰¹ Moreover, 'the ecclesial status of those who have

⁹⁹ Ibid., para 3.1.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., para 1.3.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., para 1.15.

separated themselves from the Church does not lend itself to simple definition. In a divided Christendom, there are still certain characteristics which make it one: the word of God, faith in Christ as God and saviour come in the flesh [...] and sincere devotion.¹⁰²

It is somewhat unexpected to have this nuanced mature understanding of 'divided Christendom' in an official Church document, referenced and used in the Russian Orthodox Church, which continuously manages to balance the character of the Orthodox Church as *una sancta*, while at the same time interpreting the present-day lack of unity of the Church as a complex reality requiring deep and careful reflection. It does so, as mentioned before, in a spirit of humility and level-headedness, warning of the danger of 'idealizing the past' and reminding that the Fathers of the Church gave an example of 'spiritual self-criticism.'¹⁰³ Thus the

tragic experience of misunderstanding emerging from within the Church herself and of the struggle with it during the period of the ecumenical councils has taught the children of the Orthodox Church to be vigilant. The Orthodox Church, while humbly bearing witness to her preservation of the truth, at the same time remembers all the temptations which arose during her history.¹⁰⁴

Again, very importantly, the document assumes problems arising in the Church's history as its own, and does not treat them as 'separate' strands which distanced themselves from the history of the Orthodox Church. Furthermore, misunderstandings emerged 'within the Church itself' and not from the outside, this being consistent with the overall ethos of responsibility which the Basic Principles promotes from its very first lines. The document made a mention earlier – in addition to the major schisms of the third and fourth centuries, and of the 'separation of the Roman Church' – of the 'breakaways from the unity with local Orthodox Churches, including the Russian Church.'¹⁰⁵ The authors are clearly prepared to address schisms also as 'internal' phenomena, and not merely as outside attacks.

The same sense of humble responsibility is expressed when the Basic Principles document addresses the issue of 'restoration of the unity'. The ground is set plainly and directly: Church unity 'is a part of God's design and belongs to the very essence of Christianity. It is a task of the highest priority for the Orthodox Church at every level of her life. Indifference to this task is a sin against God's commandment of unity.'¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Ibid., para 1.16.

¹⁰³ Ibid., para 1.19.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., para 1.13.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., para 2.1.

However, the type of unity is immediately and unequivocally presented thus: ‘the Orthodox Church asserts that genuine unity is possible only in the bosom of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. All other “models” of unity seem to us to be unacceptable.’¹⁰⁷

Orthodoxy appears thus as a ‘model’, the only acceptable one for the unity of the Church. Seen in conjunction with the huge and unique responsibility for the world which Orthodoxy assumes, but mostly with the implication that the ‘heterodoxisation’ of other Christians has the reverse purpose of attracting these back to the Orthodox core of the Church reveals an Orthodox understanding of itself centred and founded on the very aspiration towards unity. The structure, canon and matrix for unity lie however within the Orthodox Church itself, which gives the Orthodox two options: either to lie and wait to be discovered, while in the meantime enjoying its inherent self-sufficiency, or to ‘go out’ in a missionary drive in a desire to present the structure of unity to the world, and thus to engage in ecumenical activities and dialogue. If the latter option is chosen, the Orthodox become quickly aware that the quest for unity often follows a different structure and direction in Western contexts. What initially may seem as an inherently natural course of action proves to be rather counter-intuitive.

The Basic Principles document goes to some length to explain that what it sees as the current ethos of ecumenism is not acceptable:

The Orthodox Church cannot accept the assumption that despite the historical divisions, the fundamental and profound unity of Christians has not been broken and that the Church should be understood as coextensive with the entire “Christian world”, that Christian unity exists across denominational barriers and that the disunity of the churches belongs exclusively to the imperfect level of human relations. According to this conception, the Church remains one, but this oneness is not, as it were, sufficiently manifest in visible form. In this model of unity, the task of Christians is understood not as the restoration of a lost unity but as the manifestation of an existing unity.¹⁰⁸

Thus while seeing Church unity as ‘the unity of a new humanity in Christ’, which overcomes ‘all barriers and frontiers, including racial, linguistic and social differences’, ‘above every human and earthly union, for it has been given from above as a perfect and divine gift,’¹⁰⁹ the Basic Principles document reveals that the Orthodox are not prepared in their ecumenical endeavours to operate with an implicit all-conquering unity – which would in fact nullify its own *raison d’être* as matrix for unity – but only

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., para 2.3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., para 1.4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., para 1.3-1.5.

with the final goal of regaining the visible Church unity that has been lost. Nor are the Orthodox ready to accept any other model of unity.

The so-called 'branch theory' is also presented as 'totally unacceptable', as is any concept of 'equality of denominations.'¹¹⁰ Rejected also is the argument that the Orthodox Church 'differs from other Christian communities with which she does not have communion only in secondary matters.'¹¹¹ Moreover, 'it is inadmissible to introduce relativism into the realm of faith, to limit unity in faith to a narrow set of necessary truths so that beyond them "freedom in what is doubtful" may be allowed. Even a position of tolerance towards differences in faith is unacceptable.'¹¹²

The strength and authority of the Russian Church document in its own originating context is precisely this unwillingness to compromise matters when it comes to the understanding of unity. As was shown above the internal logic is that any model of unity other than that of the Orthodox Church is not only redundant, but also perilous and, therefore, totally unacceptable. Doubts and uncertainties and any subsequent relativism are denounced in plain terms. If tolerance be allowed, this is certainly not the right place for it. Tolerance may appear – and it does – more like a spiritual attitude and ethos, as 'dogmatic differences should be overcome, not simply bypassed, and this means that the way to unity lies through repentance, conversion and renewal.'¹¹³ Also 'while rejecting views which are erroneous', 'the Orthodox are called to treat with Christian love those who confess these views',¹¹⁴ while 'causing offence to non-Orthodox is inadmissible.'¹¹⁵

Importantly, the Basic Principles document ends with an unequivocal condemnation of those 'who distort the task of the Orthodox Church in her witness before the non-Orthodox world and consciously slander the Church authorities, accusing them of the "betrayal" of Orthodoxy.'¹¹⁶ The Russian authors feel, at this sensitive point, the need for pan-Orthodox backing and turn to the decisions of the pan-Orthodox Thessaloniki meeting of 1998 – which had, not long before the document under discussion was issued, triggered action from the WCC regarding Orthodox participation, through its direct expression of Orthodox discomfort – from which they quote copiously. Thus,

¹¹⁰ Ibid., para 2.5-2.7.

¹¹¹ Ibid., para 2.8.

¹¹² Ibid., para 2.10.

¹¹³ Ibid., para 2.7.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., para 7.1.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., para 7.3.

The delegates unanimously denounced those groups of schismatics, as well as certain extremist groups within the local Orthodox Churches themselves, that are using the theme of ecumenism in order to criticise the Church leadership and undermine its authority, thus attempting to create divisions and schisms within the Church... We have no right to withdraw from the mission laid upon us by our Lord Jesus Christ, the mission of witnessing the Truth before the non-Orthodox world.¹¹⁷

The important point made here is that the 'radical' factions within Orthodoxy which oppose ecumenism, and, more importantly, accuse Orthodox ecumenists of 'betrayal', are in fact undermining the authority of the Church, and its essential mission of exposing Orthodoxy as model and structure of unity to the non-Orthodox world. This mission is not an 'option' for the Orthodox but an obligation and a responsibility from which they cannot withdraw under any pretext. Thus the 'radical' anti-ecumenists are called 'schismatics' as they are seen to endanger unity – both within the realm of Orthodoxy and in the Christian world at large. It is them who appear as ideological followers of the early heretics – an interesting inversion, since these groups display great readiness in identifying both ecumenism and any involvement from the Orthodox part within it as 'heresies'.

The Basic Principles on the whole display a vision of a theology which is very accustomed to deal in 'paradoxes' and 'mysteries'. Thus this theology oscillates back and forth between readiness to understand, and denouncement of tolerance in matters of faith; between God's *oikonomia* – no one can assess the level of 'Orthodoxy' in any given denomination – and undisputed certainty when it comes to the fullness of truth; between a flexible understanding of today's complex reality of the 'divided Christendom', and complete rejection of today's solutions and directions for unity; between a static paradigm of Orthodoxy – in wait to be discovered –, and a dynamic one which can only conceive of an Orthodoxy that is obliged to seek the others out – and the current document clearly favours the latter paradigm. As is often the case this constant duality does not indicate an underlying weakness in this Orthodox discourse, but an internal strength and candour that are beneficial to an accurate understanding of Orthodox theological operation.

However, the great merit of the Russian document is not only its honesty but also its spirit of humility and repentance, its understanding of today's lack of Church unity as a common responsibility of all Christians, and all the more so for the Orthodox. If Church unity has been lost and needs to be restored – the main task of ecumenism today – this responsibility belongs primarily to the Orthodox. If the Orthodox have

¹¹⁷ Quoted in 'Basic Principles', para. 7.3.

maintained the model and structure for the unity of the Church, they have also received the enormous responsibility of witnessing it to the entire world. It is in this ardent unstoppable drive to witness Orthodoxy as unity, and unity as goal and crowning of Orthodoxy, and as accomplishment of Christ's commandment, that Orthodoxy finds its own traditional mode of existence. The 'static', 'waiting' paradigm of Orthodoxy is totally unacceptable here. The official document of the Russian Orthodox Church opens an avenue for a new model of Orthodox relationship with the other Christians, and hints at a paradigm for a new type of ecumenism, of 'journeying together'.

3.6. Four main points for reflection

From all the reflections of this chapter so far, four main points emerge with regard to the way the Orthodox Church sees its rapport with ecumenism.

3.6.1. The Orthodox Church is the Church.

Not merely a continuator of the primal Church, a faithful retainer of its doctrine and ethos, or an inheritor and guardian of the fullness of faith, but *the* Church of the Apostolic age in all its fullness, unchanged, unbroken and undented. The fullness of the early Church is present in all its original plenitude. The fact that it now represents only a proportion of the Christian world does not and cannot influence this plenitude, as the fullness of Christ's faith and truth are more, so to say, a matter of 'quality' rather than 'quantity'.

The Orthodox Church does seek unity, and its call does reach outside what it perceives to be the limits of the Church, since it understands its catholicity as cosmic, extending to the entire creation. Moreover, it does seem to acknowledge a special status for that part of creation and those human communities which once belonged to the whole Christian world, whom it calls to the unity of the Church. Since the Church is the Orthodox Church, it then calls all non-Orthodox to reunite with it, as in the primordial days of Christ's Church. Thus in the Orthodox Eucharistic Liturgy, the congregation chants: 'for the welfare of the holy Churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.'¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Lash (trans.), *The Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*, p. 3.

3.6.2. *Unity as reconstitution of the One Church*

When it comes to *unity*, however, *the Orthodox Church does not see this as anything else but the reconstitution of the One Church*. The only sense it sees in ecumenism is the healing of the schisms that have separated the Christians in the first place. While the Orthodox Church seems to be prepared to accept cultural diversity, which indeed already characterizes the Orthodox universe, made up, as it is, of a multitude of local or national Churches, each with its own characteristic tradition and ethos, it is not however prepared to accept a diversity and plurality of Churches. The very fact that ‘Churches’ appears as a plural is the major problem which ecumenism ought to struggle to solve.

The catholicity of the Orthodox Church, says Sauca,¹¹⁹ is not expressed as the sum of the different parts, but as the expression of the fullness.¹¹⁹ Thus, despite catholicity being seen as *multidirectional* or *holistic* – encompassing the entire creation, present and past, time and space, living and dead etc¹²⁰ – it is nevertheless seen as a reality converging toward a centre, represented by Christ, as undivided head of the Church, and not as a ‘pluralistic’ reality. This vision seems to encounter already contradictions within the Orthodox Church itself, as it is hard to understand catholicity as both gathering together a variety of contexts – and ultimately the whole cosmos and creation – while not being a ‘sum of the different parts’. Though ‘different parts’ obviously exist, the emphasis is nevertheless placed on fullness and unity.

What is even more problematic is the existence of a number of Orthodox *Churches* (*in the plural*), represented by the historical Orthodox patriarchates, but also by the appearance of many national autocephalous Churches around the turn of the century. This movement of emancipation was not entirely disconnected from the concept of *ethno-phyletism*, which the Orthodox themselves see as a heresy, as it implies bringing the idea of nation into ecclesial matters and the subsequent confusion between Church and nation. The understanding is that all these Orthodox ‘Churches’ are seen as part of the One True Orthodox Church, but the fact that their nomenclature accords one specific Church a national characteristic does not help the case made by the Orthodox for oneness and unity. Thus, to exemplify, instead of having the ‘Orthodox Church in Romania’, there is in fact a ‘Romanian Orthodox Church’, this leading to a multitude of Orthodox ‘Churches’.

¹¹⁹ Sauca, ‘The Church beyond our boundaries’, p. 213.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

However, even if the Orthodox Church 'takes the appearance of several Churches'¹²¹, contexts do differ. While these autocephalous Churches remain distinct, they do share, however, a common sacramental, liturgical and Eucharistic life. This life is made common by the joint apostolic succession (the several strands of which go back to the Apostles), by the strict adherence to the same set of dogmas and the same doctrine, by uniformity of ritual.

Or, to employ *Orthodoxia*, the term introduced by Ryabykh as 'the totality of criteria to be met by a true Church of Christ',¹²² sharing in these criteria may constitute a guarantee of commonness. These three criteria as identified by the 'Basic Principles' document are: 1. the preservation of doctrinal truth, 2. the liturgical and hierarchical order and 3. the principles of spiritual life. In turn, inter-participation in a commonly recognized Eucharist and sacramental reality has ensured 'mystically' that the union with each other and with Christ has remained unaltered. This makes this type of plurality become a simple 'appearance', while the plenitude of the unity of the local Orthodox Churches remains untouched. This is a very interesting vision to consider when approaching the tension between unity and diversity from the perspective of the Orthodox Church.

3.6.3. Inside/outside the Church

The Orthodox Church tends to see other Christians as outside the One Church, their 'Christian' character being thus 'incomplete' or even, according to some extreme interpretations, 'null and void'. 'If', asks Sauca, 'the Orthodox Church is identical with the Church witnessed to in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, who are the other Christians and what is the nature of their relationship to the Orthodox Church? To this question, the Orthodoxy of our time does not have a unique and coherent answer, thus creating confusion and pro and anti attitudes vis-à-vis participation in the ecumenical movement.'¹²³ Sauca proposes the solution of 'open conciliarity' as presented by Staniloae, according to which the non-Orthodox 'are not completely outside this sacramental mystery which is the body of Christ, the Church.'¹²⁴ According to this vision, 'all Christians belong to the same reality, the only difference being the level of their participation in that reality.'¹²⁵ Staniloae states that: 'In a way [...] the Church contains all the confessions separated from her, as these could not fully separate

¹²¹ Staniloae, *Dogmatica Ortodoxa*. Vol. II, p. 274.

¹²² Ryabykh, 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Ecumenism', p. 356.

¹²³ Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 219.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 223.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

themselves from the Tradition present in her. However, 'Church' in the full meaning of the word is only the Orthodox Church.'¹²⁶ Staniloae also speaks of an almost 'ontological' participation, as Christ, the eternal and cosmic truth, has always embraced the whole creation and the whole humanity:

In a way the whole creation is objectively framed within the light beams of the same pre-incarnational Logos, and thus is at the same stage of the Church that existed before Christ, which was called to become the Church of Christ. Objectively and subjectively, the whole humankind of various beliefs encounters the pre-incarnational Logos, to some extent. And objectively and subjectively, though not wholly, other Christian confessions do encounter Christ. It is through this that these confessions have received in part their quality as churches of Christ, being now called to their whole fulfilment as the Church of Christ.¹²⁷

Staniloae suggests here that other Christian denominations have maintained to a degree the 'quality of Churches of Christ' and that they are called to become the one Church of Christ. The whole non-Christian humanity encounters Christ, just like, in pre-Christian times, people could mystically 'predict' Christ and his incarnation. By association, this places non-Orthodox Christians in a semi/pre-Christian state, although these have retained a degree of grace which could be further exploited. Although apparently 'patronizing', this theological position regarding the non-Orthodox Christians is, in fact, progressive in the Orthodox world and could represent a step forward in Orthodox-ecumenical relations.

Along the same lines, Bulgakov writes that the universal Orthodox spirit, 'which lives in the universal Church, is more apparent to the eye of God than to that of man. In the first place all baptized persons are Christians, hence, in a certain sense, Orthodox. For Orthodoxy is composed, so to speak, of two circles: a large circle, the court of the temple and a narrow circle, the temple itself and the holy of holies.'¹²⁸ Metropolitan Kallistos speaks of a 'moderate' group of Orthodox theologians 'who holds that, while it is true to say that Orthodoxy is the Church, it is false to conclude from this that those who are not Orthodox cannot possibly belong to the Church. Many people may be members of the Church who are not visibly so; invisible bonds may exist despite an outward separation.'¹²⁹

Moreover if 'all Christians belong to the same reality, the only difference being the level of their participation to that reality,'¹³⁰ to cite Sauca again, this puts discussion on a different plane altogether – that of participation, of involvement, of acting out faith.

¹²⁶ Staniloae, *Teologia dogmatica Ortodoxa*. Vol. III, p. 275.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 276.

¹²⁸ Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 188.

¹²⁹ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 316.

¹³⁰ Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 223.

Participation becomes a dynamic concept, a parameter that cannot be easily measured or quantified, and it would be very risky for anyone to claim 'full participation' in any reality. At best one can attempt to participate 'as fully as it is possible'. This again suggests that, since the Orthodox too participate in this reality, they too need to act and to engage in such a way as to make their involvement as complete as possible. The 'reality' Staniloae was talking about is the meeting place for the unity of the Church, and it seems that reality is, for the Orthodox, Orthodoxy in its perfected and 'idealised' form. However, all the Churches aspire towards a perfected reality, which makes the journey towards unity a common endeavour. Every genuine Christian community then could be seen as being on its way towards Orthodoxy, not only the Orthodox.

In the words of Father Philip Ryabykh – encouraging, as they come from an official of the Russian Orthodox Church –, 'to attain *Orthodoxia* as a characteristic of one's faith is something that the Orthodox not only suggest that others attain, but they also demand it of themselves. We propose that other Christians also embark on this path and that we can work together on this way.'¹³¹

3.6.4. *Orthodoxy as matrix for unity*

Most importantly, perhaps, the Orthodox Church sees its role in the Christian world as 'special' and prophetic, as it alone has remained the faithful carrier and witness of the full truth of faith, precisely – it can be argued – so as ultimately to call back all stranded Christian groups back to the one original Church. This perspective gives a whole new understanding to the 'ecumenical vocation' of the Orthodox Church. In the words of Florovsky:

By her inner consciousness the Orthodox Church is bound to claim an exceptional position in divided Christendom. She is also bound to claim for herself an exceptional and peculiar task in all endeavours to overcome the present sore disunity of Christians and to recover that Christian unity which has been given once and has been lost. The whole program of ecumenical action is implied in this Orthodox ecclesiology.¹³²

Or as Sauca puts it (as cited before): 'The Orthodox Church, by her inner conviction and consciousness, has a special and exceptional position in divided Christendom, as the bearer of and the witness to the tradition of the ancient undivided Church from which all existing denominations stem, by way of reduction and separation.'¹³³

These very interesting observations present yet another perspective on what Orthodoxy sees itself to be. Orthodoxy represents the 'right faith' in opposition to the

¹³¹ Riabykh, 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Ecumenism', pp. 356-357.

¹³² Florovsky, *Ecumenism I. A doctrinal approach*, p. 140-141.

¹³³ Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 212.

other Christian groups who have veered away from that faith, and it has safeguarded the truth of Christ throughout the centuries. The correctness of faith has been carried unaltered, it is believed, through many trials and difficulties, and the 'Orthodoxy' of faith has remained as a constant 'alert' to the rest of the world, both about its errors but also about where the truth is still to be found. One cannot ignore the 'corrective', 'pedagogical' view of this approach. It can be said that the Orthodox Church has remained 'Orthodox' *precisely* as a response to the schisms and to the lost unity of faith, as a beacon guiding Christianity back towards its 'right' primordial faith. From this perspective, one of the basic objectives of Orthodoxy – if not the most significant of them all – is that of 'calling back' the Christian world to the right faith, to the reunion of all Christians into the One True Church, the doctrine of which the Orthodox Church has fought to maintain unaltered for centuries.

In practice this vision of special witness has been marred by a tendency towards self-sufficiency that can eventually transform Orthodoxy into a goal in itself. Instead of remaining a 'beacon' and witness to the whole world, Orthodoxy does tend to become focused on itself as a closed impermeable reality. Another problem is that the Orthodox Church often fails to express clearly to the rest of the world what Orthodoxy actually is – a way of life in Christ, with unbroken roots in the Apostolic age – and so makes it seem instead as if it desires submission to a rigid set of doctrines or to a centre of power.

However, according to this understanding, Orthodoxy appears to be ecumenical by its very 'internal' logic. '*Doxa*' has been preserved as '*orthos*' with the precise goal of calling those parts of the Christian world who have left the plenary Church back into the fundamental oneness of the Church. As a 'special' witness to the world, the Orthodox Church brings not only the message of Christ's truth, but also of the compulsory unity of his truth. By rejecting the other Churches as flawed and incomplete and by placing them outside the sphere of the Church, Orthodoxy is also implicitly giving them a directive as to where real unity and truth are to be found – a severe call to reunion. Even 'excommunication itself', as seen in the 'Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox', is 'a means of spiritual rebirth' for those excommunicated.¹³⁴ Moreover, as was observed in the analysis of the 'Basic Principles' document, Orthodoxy is also seen as a 'model',¹³⁵ the only acceptable form for the

¹³⁴ See 'The Basic Principles', para 1.11.

¹³⁵ See 'The Basic Principles', para 2.3.

unity of the Church. The structure, canon and matrix for unity lie within the Orthodox Church itself.

It can then be said that the truth of the Church has been preserved unchanged in an attempt not only to preserve the fullness of Christ's truth for the salvation of its local communities, but also to render the Church a 'seed', a 'matrix', a durable paradigm which may allow the separated non-Orthodox to return to the structures, ethos and doctrine of the original Church of apostolic times. The role of Orthodoxy thus is not merely to preserve the truth of faith, but also to preserve it precisely for the sake of the reunion of Christianity back into its original mould - understood to be the Orthodox Church.

The implications of this vision of the Orthodox Church as a sort of 'time-capsule', a significant and comprehensive slice of the past hermetically sealed and preserved underground for the (re)discovery of future generations, are enormous. Given such an implied *raison d'être* of the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox cannot conceive of any ecumenical endeavour towards unity without their being present at the proceedings, if only as observers or arbiters. However, since today's ecumenical movement is heading a different way, and not towards union with Orthodoxy, the Orthodox can only see this present endeavour as a substitute, an initiative that has been confiscated from its rightful promoter. That is why, perhaps, the Orthodox Church feels the need to participate, whilst at the same time denouncing the ecumenical moment as false and misdirected.

The Orthodox Church cannot help but acknowledge some benefits and achievements of the ecumenical movement so far, indeed, having itself influenced some of these developments. In consequence, unable to repudiate the ecumenical endeavours entirely, the Orthodox choose to see them as a beginning of unity, with the hope that, by following the constant and tenacious witness of the Orthodox within the ecumenical movement, the non-Orthodox will understand one day that Orthodoxy is the only route to follow. It can be thus said that, for the Orthodox, the present-day ecumenical movement is at best at a 'pre-ecumenical' stage (a vision that was also tackled in the previous chapter on Ecumenism). However, both the real locus and horizon of ecumenism lie elsewhere, within the bounds of Orthodoxy itself.

Such an interpretation may also explain the passion and energy that surrounds Orthodox participation in ecumenical contexts: the emotional and desperate laments with regard to some terrifying danger perceived in ecumenism. Underlying levels of

frustration are enormous: the Orthodox Church, unique keeper of the one true faith, ancient and prophetic arbiter and convener of separated Christianity finds itself treated in ecumenical contexts just as a mere denomination among many other denominations. The ecumenical task which rightly belongs to the Orthodox Church from its self-defined identity, seems to have been appropriated and is now used differently – not to ‘repair’ divisions but to somewhat justify them – rendering all that Orthodoxy has safeguarded and affirmed, indeed its very identity, valueless. This then appears as the ultimate betrayal, not only of the ecumenical endeavour but of the Orthodox Church’s very identity.

Thus, to sum up, in addressing the relationship between Orthodoxy and ecumenism this chapter has investigated the view that, even if the Orthodox Church sees itself as the Church, it nevertheless acknowledges a special status for those communities which once belonged to the whole Christian world, whom it calls back to the unity of the Church. Also, Orthodoxy is not only something that the Orthodox urge the others to attain, but they also demand it of themselves. Moreover, if the Orthodox Church is not keen to assume part of the responsibility for the historical schisms, it nevertheless assumes full responsibility for reuniting the Church, as it has alone maintained the unaltered truth of faith, and the structure of the Church of Christ.

In its fourth and last chapter, this study will seek to outline paradigms for Orthodoxy and ecumenism informed by a different ethos and angle, ‘fine-tuned’ to enable a full and genuine understanding of the ecumenical operation. This study will focus primarily on a preliminary theological vision, a ‘pre-methodology’ informing and preparing the ecumenical actors prior to their ecumenical exposure. It will also bring to the fore a number of essential aspects of Orthodox theology which are of major significance to the ecumenical enterprise.

CHAPTER FOUR: NEW PARADIGMS

4.1. Revisiting the themes

When exploring the meaning of Orthodoxy and, in particular, the understanding of Orthodoxy within Orthodox Church circles, this study identified two interpretations of Orthodoxy. Besides the customary view that the Orthodox Church is the same as the one true Church of the apostolic times, there is also a tendency to see Orthodoxy as *the* way of life in Christ, the fullness of truth which, by its inherent inner structure, seeks to make itself known in the world, more than merely an ecclesial jurisdiction or a set of doctrines. If the Orthodox Church is a great follower and defender of Tradition, this does not mean that the Orthodox have simply safeguarded a set of sources. Certainly, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, together with the wider and more complex inheritance of the Church community as a whole, are of huge importance for the Orthodox. Yet even more importantly, the Orthodox have been keeping alive a spirit of energy and action, a vision of Tradition as 'a dynamic process of continuity and renewal in the Holy Spirit, who bears witness to the crucified and risen Christ, throughout the ages, involving the human and historical dimension as partner in communion with the eternal Trinity.'¹

Theosis or deification, regarded as the goal of Christian life, further underlines the dynamic character of Orthodoxy. Paradoxically, this ultimate purpose is seen as a perpetual journey, a constant aspiration towards perfection, since in the process of journeying towards the reality of *theosis* there lies *theosis* itself. Deification is thus not a 'state' but a 'movement'. To see the goal of Christian life as a 'process', or a journey, gives an inherent, inner and perpetually dynamic character to Orthodoxy as a way of life. *Theosis* does not remain an abstract notion but it represents in fact *praxis*. In its most concrete form, this *theosis*-aspiring *praxis* is encountered in the constant 'link' which the Church community maintains with God through the sacramental/Eucharistic life of the Church, through the spiritual life and prayer of each individual member of the Church.

Much of the above may not, in fact, seem to represent anything fundamentally different from what other traditions understand Christian life to be. Yet it must be emphasised that the sacramental dimension, as will be seen later on, represents an essential uniting factor in the Orthodox understanding and *praxis*. So much so that the

¹ Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, p. 157.

lack of a unified sacramental life – of a common Eucharist, ultimately – keeps the Orthodox and the other Christians in a fundamental separation.

At the same time, Orthodoxy has been shown to be not only a way of life but an exploration, a journey – a particularly efficacious image, as it conveys both the idea of dynamism and that of renewal. To see Orthodoxy as renewal is to oppose the idea of a ‘given’, received inheritance, and to propose instead Orthodoxy as a journey towards the salvific Truth of Christ, as something that needs to be discovered and then constantly re-discovered – not just by the non-Orthodox, but by the Orthodox themselves. Since ‘Orthodoxy presents to all Christians a treasure belonging to all and which can serve as a basis for the renewal of all’,² the Orthodox journey appears thus to be less ‘complete’ in isolation, as a pilgrimage without fellow travellers.

Moving to the modern-history phenomenon known as the ecumenical movement, this study suggested that ecumenism started as a movement of repentance, following the horrors of the two world wars and the Holocaust, a movement that envisioned fundamental change involving an act of humility in faith, a process of *metanoia*. This view placed ecumenism in close association with concepts that are central, essential and familiar to Orthodox theology: *metanoia*, renewal, repentance, humility.

Seen by many at the time as the ultimate goal of the Ecumenical Movement, the formation of the WCC represented an important experiment, as it tried theologically to reconcile for the first time the encounter of two differing ecclesiologies into a coherent theological discourse. The resulting vision was not very coherent however and contained fundamental contradictions. Its balancing act between the acceptance of the fact that the Church Universal is wider than one’s own *ecclesia* and the possibility that whatever may be found outside a Church’s own walls, but still within the realm of *the one Church of Christ* may in fact be something else than ‘Church’,³ with its implied premeditated ambiguity, left room in the early years of the WCC for certain Churches to go back and forth, from one interpretation to the other, as seemed fit. The inconsistency of the theological argument may have worked as a ‘preliminary’ vision for the very difficult ecumenical start, and was certainly justified by the immediacy and importance of the task at hand. However, this ambivalent theology ceased later to

2 Marc-Antoine Costa de Beauregard with Dumitru Staniloae, *Mica dogmatica vorbita. Dialoguri la Cernica* (Short spoken dogmatics. Dialogues at Cernica) (Sibiu: Deisis, 2000), p 41; my translation.

3 The Toronto Statement, The World Council of Churches, accessed on 1 March 2012, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/toronto-1950/toronto-statement.html>.

be constructive, since neither the Orthodox nor the Roman Catholics have ever in fact ceased to think of themselves as the one true Church.

In the second chapter of this study ecumenism was also identified as a movement of *metanoia*, as a dynamic process. In the various descriptions of ecumenism explored, it was defined variously as a 'movement' a 'mode of action',⁴ a 'process', a 'dynamic concern',⁵ a 'renewal', a 'reform'.⁶ Ecumenism as a dynamic, active enterprise, a renewal-centred process is an especially fruitful interpretation as it maintains ecumenism in the practical, participatory sphere of active personal involvement. The language of spiritual participation is one which the Orthodox love and understand well, and which can offer useful ground for reflection on the participation of the Orthodox in ecumenical processes. Moreover, of even greater relevance to this thesis is the implication in the ecumenical literature produced, that ecumenism is a 'journey', an ongoing process. As a process, it is not a transitory or 'circumstantial' necessity of the times, but a constant aspect of theology, as its goal is indeed to 'maintain unity and to counter division.'⁷

As this study has revealed, the renewing, journey-like character of ecumenism has led a number of theologians - Orthodox⁸, but also Western⁹ - to start seeing ecumenism primarily as a spiritual enterprise, which in turn has brought a 'suspicion-trust' polarity into the discussion. In the face of the current impasse, a greater degree of commitment and self-sacrifice seems to be necessary as 'we have to trust one another and to take risks with our own ecclesial identities.'¹⁰ While we have to remain open to the call and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are to continue to work with what we have achieved, in a spirit of faith and patience.

In addressing the relationship between Orthodoxy and ecumenism, and the ways in which the Orthodox see ecumenism, this study has argued that, if the Orthodox Church sees itself without fail as *the* Church, preserving the fullness of the early Church in all its original plenitude, it nevertheless seems to acknowledge a special status for those communities which once belonged to the Christian world, whom it

4 From the entry on 'Christianity' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed on 12 August 2012, <http://m.eb.com/topic/115240/Christianity#67623.toc>.

5 Torrance, *Theology in reconciliation*, p. 15.

6 Gros, McManus, Riggs, *Introduction to Ecumenism*, p. 3.

7 Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 19.

8 See Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, pp. 231-258; Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy*; Evdokimov, *Ages of the spiritual life*.

9 See Avis, 'Unreal worlds meeting'; Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*; Dulles, 'Saving ecumenism from itself'.

10 Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 228.

calls back to the unity of the Church. When it comes to unity, however, the Orthodox Church does not see this as anything else but the reconstitution of the One Church – the Orthodox Church.

However, if all Christians partake in the same reality, but with varying degrees of participation, this places the discussion in a different sphere – that of involvement, of acting out faith. As the level of participation differs, depending on the level of engagement of each and every faithful in an Orthodox/Christian way of life, the Orthodox too need to act and to engage in such a way as to make their involvement as plenary as possible. They too can be ‘closer’ or ‘farther’ from the true Church. As mentioned earlier, Ryabykh suggested that ‘to attain *Orthodoxia* as a characteristic of one’s faith is something that the Orthodox not only suggest that others attain, but they also demand it of themselves.’¹¹

As has been seen in the chapters on Orthodoxy and Orthodoxy and ecumenism, the Orthodox Church itself, by its very federative structure may offer an ecumenical ‘practical’ model for a future united Church. For Metropolitan Kallistos, since no ‘submission’ is required, and since the Orthodox Church is already a ‘federated’ body of local Churches, reunion of various Churches within Orthodoxy should not be an impossible task.¹² Also in Bulgakov’s words (1935):

The Orthodox Church is a system of national, autocephalous Churches, allied one with another. [...] The only solution would be the following: these communities [*the other Christian traditions*], while preserving intact their historical, national and local characters, would draw near to Orthodox doctrine and life and would become capable of joining forces in the unity of the ecumenical Church, as autonomous or autocephalous Churches.¹³

The Orthodox Church organises itself ‘in the varied contexts of life of various nations or groups of faithful, determined by their traditions’¹⁴ – the same idea being expressed by the document of the Russian Orthodox Church, ‘Basic Principles of Attitude to the non-Orthodox’. This means that ‘the one Church can take the appearance of several autocephalous Churches, each with its own statutes and regulations and manners of action’ while the Church remains one in dogmas and in sacraments.¹⁵ Inter-participation in a commonly recognized Eucharist and sacramental reality has ensured that the union with each other and with Christ has remained intact within the

11 Ryabykh, ‘The Russian Orthodox Church and Ecumenism’, pp. 356-357.

12 Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 317.

13 Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, pp. 187-188.

14 Staniloae, *Teologia dogmatica Ortodoxa*. Vol. II, p. 274.

15 Ibid.

Orthodox Church. This type of plurality, thus, becomes a simple 'appearance', while the plenitude of the unity of the local Orthodox Churches remains.

With regard to Orthodox-non-Orthodox relations, another essential point is the implied theological *raison d'être* supporting the very core of Orthodox identity, namely that the role of the Orthodox Church is not merely to preserve the truth of faith, but also to preserve it *precisely* for the sake of the reunion of Christianity back in its original mould - the Orthodox Church. The implications of this vision are enormous: the Orthodox cannot conceive of any ecumenical endeavour without them conducting the proceedings. In a sense, the Orthodox feel that the ecumenical endeavour, rightly belonging to the Orthodox Church by its very identity, has been appropriated and is now used differently, not to 'heal' divisions but to justify them, thus rendering valueless all that Orthodoxy has safeguarded and affirmed throughout the centuries.

These considerations prompt the following conclusion: even if the Orthodox Church is not keen to assume part of the responsibility for the historical schisms, it nevertheless assumes full responsibility for reuniting the Church, as it, alone, it claims, has maintained the unaltered truth of faith, and the structure of the Church of Christ. Orthodoxy believes this responsibility to be a continuation of the Christ-given mission of bringing the whole humanity to the life in Christ, and in particular to those traditions which were once part of the one primary Church, and which have also inherited to a higher or lesser degree the Tradition of the Church.

Orthodoxy however, it is asserted by the Orthodox scholars, does not entail a calling to a central jurisdiction, nor does it bring merely a set system of doctrines and regulations, but it proposes an ethos of prayerful, spiritual life, in love and humility, a way of life of change, transformation and renewal, of progressively coming to the life in Christ, and of allowing Christ to dwell in us. Orthodoxy calls all to this way of life fuelled by and centred around the sacramental life of the Church and the Eucharist, a call which it indeed itself attempts to follow without ceasing. However, Orthodoxy has not been preserved, as it were, for its own sake. Even if it guarantees a salvific platform for its flock, it nevertheless also holds the mission to bring the entire humanity into the salvific truth of Christ and, more importantly, to bring back into its fold the broken limbs of the former Christian world. The Orthodoxy of the Church has been preserved precisely for that purpose.

4.2. The Orthodox mission for humanity

Orthodoxy has not safeguarded the truth of Christ's Church *from* the other Christians who are seen as having departed from it and chosen less perfect ways, but, in a sense, *for* them. Orthodoxy contains within it, alongside the salvific truth, the structure and model of the Church's unity, which awaits the return of its separated elements, thus re-accomplishing the quintessential Christ-centred unity and oneness of the Church. The truth of faith, Christ himself, cannot bring witness to the world by ignoring the wound and tragedy of division, but struggles continuously to heal and unite. Thus the Orthodox Church should not seek to justify divisions and separate those who are called, into 'those who are right' and 'those who are wrong', into opposing parties or, worse, into 'those who are called' and 'those who are no longer called'. Orthodoxy, as *the* way of life in Christ, by its inherent inner drive and structure, seeks to make itself known in the world, and to unite the world in Christ, according to the model of the Holy Trinity – which is the supreme structure of unity. Orthodoxy cannot remain detached or indifferent in front of divisions, but it should call for active participation towards unity, as part of its far-reaching aspiration towards renewal and transfiguration of humanity. It ought to address the call to unity not simply to 'others' but mainly to itself as the 'main actor' in God's plan of saving humanity.

A fundamental tension thus is revealed in the vision that the Orthodox tend to have of Orthodoxy in its relations with ecumenism or with the other Christian traditions. On the one hand the Orthodox have a tendency to focus on the community of *the* one true Church, which they perceive to be the Orthodox Church. From this perspective they can hardly summon up any interest towards what is to be found 'outside' the Church itself, and feel little – if any – responsibility towards the various traditions which, despite sharing to a degree the same apostolic tradition, are seen to have veered away from the Church. Not only does the 'ethos' of these 'outside' traditions feel different now, likewise their liturgical life and sacramental life, but the apostolic succession is perceived to have been somehow discontinued – as was intimated earlier in the previous chapter of this study. Thus the responsibility both for the separation and for the efforts invested in a 'return' to the former unity of the Church seems to be transferred exclusively onto the non-Orthodox groups.

On the other hand, Orthodoxy has kept and guarded in fullness the tradition of the early Church in all its complexity – unchanged, it is believed – not only for its own sake, but also – perhaps mostly – for the benefit of mankind, and in particular, it can be

argued, for the benefit of its separated brothers and sisters who, though once 'Orthodox', have found themselves for various reasons 'outside the Church' as the Orthodox see it. Ultimately the Orthodox divorce from and the implicit 'excommunication' of the departing groups happened not as a definitive condemnation, 'break up' or total dissociation from the outside Christian world, but, as it can be inferred from the Russian document on the Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox, this gesture had ultimately a 'pedagogical' purpose. Whether justified or not, this 'punitive' snub or dismissal was not entirely devoid of love but aimed at making the 'offending' groups become aware of their mistake, repent and ultimately return to the true faith that they had previously rejected. It was by contrast to the 'erroneous' groups that the Church proclaimed itself 'Orthodox', that is plainly rejecting the error, but also reminding the offenders and everyone else where the truth had remained safely kept.

Therefore it would appear that the Orthodox are faced with an existential dilemma, wavering – as Catholic theologian Paul D. Murray put it when referring more generally to the Church's drive towards catholicity – 'between the centripetal and the centrifugal forces of the Spirit's activity in the world; between constant gathering in communion and continual evangelical dispersal and engagement throughout the world.'¹⁶ On the one hand, the Orthodox were granted the crucial mission and responsibility to keep the structure and tradition of the original true Church of Christ. They were entrusted with this invaluable treasure as a salvific platform for the Church and for the entire humankind. Safeguarding this inheritance as a matter of identity meant that, if human groups or trends were ever to venture, be pushed or 'lured' away from the core of faith, the Church was to remain steadfast to its unchangeable truth, as a beacon forever calling humanity back to the essential core of Christian faith. That is the enormous responsibility that the Orthodox see as entrusted to themselves and it represents nothing less than what they essentially *see themselves to be*.

On the other hand, the Orthodox are faced again and again with the difficult reality that the former Christian world is now separated and fragmented and that – according to their own understanding of 'Church' – certain Christian groups no longer share in the same unified Eucharistic, sacramental and liturgical universe and thus appear to be placed in an uncertain dimension which the Orthodox cannot always perceive and

¹⁶ Paul D. Murray, 'Receptive ecumenism and Catholic learning – establishing the agenda'. In *Receptive ecumenism and the call to Catholic learning. Exploring a way for contemporary ecumenism*, Paul D. Murray (ed.), pp. 5-26 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 18.

acknowledge as 'Church'. While the Orthodox were prepared to exclude from Orthodoxy a great chunk of the former larger Church, they have never managed to ascribe a precise place, role or status for these 'outside' groups. What seems to remain a common perception is that the non-Orthodox have 'voluntarily' placed themselves outside the Church of Christ which represents essentially the only *locum* and *praxis* and structure for salvation. Moreover, these departing groups have been associated with various heresies of old, having been actively opposed – once, but perhaps now still – to the accepted Orthodox mainstream doctrine of the Church. This could bring an element of risk or a downright threat to those Orthodox Christians brave (or 'foolish') enough to venture outside the secure walls of the Orthodox Church, as it is often claimed by anti-ecumenical advocates. Even the more moderate Orthodox faithful will sometimes fail to see how anything outside the organic body of the one true Church – always the same, never changed or diminished – can have any real relevance for them, particularly as this vision of Orthodoxy as a society 'chosen' to live the life of Christ comes tinted in the rosy glow of a special prophetic calling reserved for the Orthodox alone.

How is the Orthodox faithful or theologian to desire the return of the break-away communities to the former Orthodoxy, when the Church itself does not seem to need or pursue this return? 'The Orthodox Church was and is the *Una Sancta*, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. It is full; it lacks not.'¹⁷ At the same time, he/she is called to proclaim the right path to all those who have veered outside the Orthodox way. How is that fundamental calling and essential responsibility going to be exercised? The first step towards solving this impasse would be the gradual adoption of a new paradigm, a new vision of Orthodoxy which, while not different in any way from the traditional perception, would bring a different ethos to the way the Orthodox see themselves in relation to an increasingly pluralistic world, but also within their own societies.

As this research has so far identified, the Orthodox find themselves often in a position which could be described as 'reserved conservatism'. This view implies a denial that there ever was a separation, a divorce between large communities of Christians. Rather, the Orthodox were 'left' by groups of 'schismatics' or 'heretics'. It also emphasises that everything, *including* the original unity, has been preserved in the Orthodox Church. Since the unity in Christ could never in fact be altered, the need and

¹⁷ Reeves, 'The Price of Ecumenism'.

responsibility actively to seek it remains only with the non-Orthodox. A summary of the starting premises of this paradigm would include:

- *The unity of the Church means a return to the original one catholic and apostolic Church.*
- *That primordial one catholic Church is the Orthodox Church.*
- *People who are no longer in the Orthodox Church have left that unity and the plenitude of truth, thus condemning themselves to be outside the Church, thus becoming forever responsible for their action.*
- *Orthodoxy as fullness of the Truth of Christ is to be found in the Orthodox Church, which has preserved and safeguarded the Right Faith since apostolic times.*
- *Ecumenism as a return to the original unaltered Truth of the original one Church, can only mean a return to the Orthodox Church.*
- *(Thus) An active engagement on the part of the Orthodox in the Ecumenical Movement can only mean a conversion of the non-Orthodox back to Orthodoxy.*
- *The ecumenical endeavour as exposure to the world outside the preservationist universe of the Orthodox Church poses a threat to that which has been so painstakingly safe-guarded.*

This study proposes a new working paradigm for the Orthodox of ‘active *metanoia*’, a shift of perspective that would allow for a more transformational, humble and repentant approach to the endeavour towards Church unity. While maintaining the premise that the unity of the Church means a return to the primordial one catholic Church, the new vision would propose a new set of principles. As an aside, it should be noted here that this starting premise of the return to the primordial apostolic Church must entail a return to the lost spirit of catholicity and the ethos of communion in love, to a ‘purity’ of faith, and not a ‘return in time’ to that precise particular reality of the Church of the early centuries. It is a return to a set of principles and to a special ethos, which needs to be understood as a dynamic endeavour of rediscovery, and not a wiping out of the post-apostolic-period history. That would be no more than a secular vision of a Church stuck in some era from the remote past.

A comparable attempt to propose a shift of angle and a new paradigm for Catholicism and ecumenism has already come, as mentioned earlier, through the work of scholar Paul D. Murray and his ongoing project on *Receptive ecumenism and Catholic learning*, conducted in the academic milieu of Durham (England) and attracting and engaging a significant number of important theologians from all Christian traditions. As far as Catholicism is concerned, Murray suggests a shift of paradigm from the ‘familiar’ ‘teaching, repeating, judging, and defending modes’ of the Church towards a

Catholicism in an 'explicitly receptive, learning mode.'¹⁸ Just as the Orthodox view Orthodoxy as essentially a fundamental principle and *modus vivendi* of the Church, Murray also presents Catholicism in its wider understanding: as a way of life '*kath'holon*, according to the whole truth in Christ.'¹⁹ Thus to be 'more fully, more richly Catholic' is to be 'more fully, more richly the Church of Christ', to become more clearly – as put in *Lumen Gentium*, which Murray quotes – 'the sacrament of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind.'²⁰ Murray calls for a fundamental shift for the Churches 'from each assertively defending their own perceived rights in competition with each other, to each instead prioritizing the need to attend to and to act upon their specific responsibilities revealed in the face of the other.'²¹

Murray's ecumenical vision rests on the aspect of 'learning' which is seen as fundamentally informing Christian transformation and conversion – a 'transformational receptivity' which can be the only 'explicit driving-motor of ecumenical engagement.'²² Being constantly prepared to learn does not imply the diminishing of one's own identity, but on the contrary, it entails becoming more fully what one is, 'through a process of imaginatively explored and critically discerned receptive learning from others' particular gifts.'²³ Murray's vision is encapsulated in the interplay of the paired concepts of *receptive ecumenism* and *Catholic learning*, the former referring to what we can learn from others with a view to constantly growing in the life in Christ, while the latter emphasises that the Catholic drive of Christians needs to be primarily receptive. In other words the movement towards unity needs not only be outward-bound but also open and hospitable to elements coming from the wider Christian world.

Murray is aware that the twin notions he employs of *receptive ecumenism* and *Catholic learning* are not novel, both articulating familiar features of ecumenical and Catholic thought and practice. However, 'formally naming a way of thinking or proceeding and so drawing it to explicit attention can release its strategic potential and shaping influence in ways previously unforeseen.'²⁴ And this could also describe the attempt of the present study and its proposal for another paradigm (or set of paradigms) for Orthodoxy and ecumenism – not as something new, but as something which could

¹⁸ Murray, 'Receptive ecumenism and Catholic learning, p. 17.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 15.

²² Ibid., p. 14.

²³ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

trigger fresh potential and drive within these realities by drawing back 'explicit attention' to some of its well-known aspects.

A primarily 'receptive' ethos of openness is indeed fundamental in inter-Christian processes, and would certainly benefit the Orthodox as a counterbalance to the slightly solipsistic view which tends to take over in the Orthodox context. Thus, if the Orthodox believe that the Orthodox Church represents the unchanged Church of the apostolic times, they should nevertheless acknowledge that the Church has lost the primordial unity of the early Church. The Orthodox are not permitted to ignore the separation in the Church and must struggle towards that lost unity – unity which is intrinsic, as we will show later, to the understanding of Orthodoxy.

When placing the non-Orthodox outside the organic body of the Church, the Orthodox should also be aware of the risk that underlies any attempt to define clear-cut borders for the Church. 'We know where the Church is', wrote Metropolitan Kallistos, paraphrasing the important 20th century Russian theologian Paul Evdokimov, 'but we cannot be sure where it is not.'²⁵ The Orthodox should also remember that non-Orthodox share in the same apostolic tradition and that these have retained – in the words of Bulgakov – a 'grain of Orthodoxy'.²⁶ If Orthodoxy is seen as the fullness of Christ's truth, kept and safeguarded since apostolic times, it is also a way of life, a journey towards deification, which cannot be inherited, but needs to be achieved. Orthodoxy has inherited the platform and the signposts designed to facilitate that journey, but not the journey or its destination itself. If ecumenism means a return to the Orthodoxy of the early Church, the return to and the constant renewed discovery of Orthodoxy is also a calling for the Orthodox themselves.

Even if they choose to employ the language of 'conversion' the Orthodox need to remember that any genuine transformational adherence to the faith in Christ has always been triggered by a spirit of genuine love, humility and transparency. This needs to remain also the spirit of any ecumenical interaction: an approach in the spirit of *koinonia* (the communion in love), prayer and responsibility.

There is a terrific fear that ecumenism – as exposure to the world outside the preservationist universe of the Orthodox Church – poses a threat to that fundamental truth which has been so painstakingly safe-guarded. Perhaps this fear comes because ecumenical endeavours have been kept separate from the life of the Church. The fact

²⁵ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 308.

²⁶ Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 188.

that ecumenism has been mainly a 'diplomatic', 'political' activity, not internal but adjacent to the life of the Church, has made it seem as a dubious action in the eyes of the Orthodox faithful. It is rather significant for instance that the 'ecumenical branch' of the Russian Orthodox Church is called the 'Department for External Church Relations'. Since the desire for Christian unity is at the very core of Orthodox identity, ecumenical activities should be internalized within the life of the Church. Ecumenism should become a spiritual, prayer-based approach, grounded in the sacramental life of the Church, that can only be carried out in the spirit of trust. To raise and maintain an awareness regarding the aspiration of Orthodoxy towards unity in general, but mostly towards unity with the traditions that once formed part of the early catholic world, should be one of the priorities of the Orthodox Church. This would simply expand the message already existing in the Orthodox Liturgy when the faithful pray 'for the welfare of the holy Churches of God, and for the union of all.'²⁷ Even if it can be argued that this ancient calling was – and still is – referring to the unity of the local Orthodox Churches, it is undeniably still an urge towards the unity of the entire Christian world (as was the case in the times whence the Liturgy originated). This same message for unity has been carried along by the community of the Church – perhaps not accidentally – into the different world reality of today. Nonetheless, a spiritual approach to ecumenism that is not divorced from the sacramental 'inner' life of the Church would undermine any suspicion or fear for those involved in a dialogue with other Christians.

The new multifold paradigm for ecumenical participation outlined above could constitute a new basis for the involvement of the Orthodox faithful in ecumenical encounters at all levels. This paradigm is mostly concerned with the 'starting attitude' of ecumenical actors, with the preliminary vision that informs their self-understanding and their understanding of the ecumenical endeavour, *before* they engage in ecumenical activities. It is a vision that sets the scene, the ethos, the platform for a genuine ecumenical participation. Even if this paradigm could/would influence the process itself of participation and action within ecumenical contexts, that sphere is not the direct object of this study. Moreover it would be unrealistic to expect a change in ecumenical contexts to be triggered only by a paradigm shift within the Orthodox Church. The ecumenical movement has been facing its own crises for the past decades, and it too is in need of a change of vision.

27 Lash (trans.), *The Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*, p. 3.

This study thus proposes that the Orthodox Church, to paraphrase Congar, would need to rotate ‘through a few degrees on its own axis in the direction of convergence towards others.’²⁸ It will propose, however, an angle adjustment not only for the Orthodox vision in relation to ecumenism, but also, in correlation, an adjustment for the ecumenical endeavour itself – although the proposed perspective for a new ecumenism is still informed in this reflection by the Orthodox perspective.

4.3. Four essential themes

While it is beyond the scope of this study to resolve the issue of Orthodoxy and ecumenism in its entirety, a number of related essential themes for further exploration have been identified:

Journeying together. The ongoing engagement

Christ is calling all to unite in the Orthodoxy of His Church and to participate in it. We are all called to Orthodoxy, and no jurisdiction can exempt us from that call. Neither is this call an admonitory one addressed only to the non-Orthodox, calling them to return to the faith structure they have left, as that would give the Orthodox the false perception that their call to Orthodoxy has somehow been fulfilled, and no participation is required any longer from them. The journey of faith made in isolation is a tragic reality, an anomaly contradicting the very message of Christ, an error which we are all called to eradicate.

At the same time, a rather similar vision can also contribute to a new possible paradigm for ecumenism. As it has been shown earlier on in this research, ecumenism would benefit equally from being envisaged as an ongoing process, a constant aspect of theology, as its goal will always be to ‘maintain unity and to counter division.’²⁹

Unity as core of Christian life and identity

The aspiration of the Orthodox to achieve unity in Christ is part of their Orthodox faith and identity, and not a specially developed ‘skill’. The work for unity is centred around the sacraments of the Church, is informed by the love of the uniting Trinity; it is a spiritual component of Orthodox life of central importance, not divorced from the sacramental life of the faithful. This vision, which ceases to present the endeavours to Church unity as ‘political’, ‘diplomatic’, ‘external’ initiatives (this brings a perceived risk of polluting the truth of faith with secular elements) replaces the old view with a

²⁸ Yves Congar, *Dialogue between Christians. Catholic contributions to ecumenism*. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), p. 21.

²⁹ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 19.

vision of unity resting on Christ's sacraments and fuelled by Trinitarian love. It brings a braver, safer and more consistent Orthodox approach to inter-Christian contexts.

Ecumenism as spiritual enterprise

A question that could be then raised is whether this sort of participation in the spirit of communion but without clear 'agendas' or landmarks could in fact generate and maintain the same enthusiasm and commitment necessary to engage in the ecumenical life-long project. The answer could be (following on from the above-mentioned vision of ecumenism as a continuing process, as constant *metanoia*) that ecumenism is to be seen more and more like a faith-based, spiritual enterprise. This vision would have a two-pronged effect: on the one hand, ecumenism would be seen, as mentioned above in the Orthodox context, as intrinsic to Christian life and intimately linked with the sacramental and communitarian life of the Church, and not as an isolated expertise. Secondly, this vision would bring back into the equation the concept of trust, as we would be required 'to trust one another and to take risks with our own ecclesial identities'.³⁰

Ecumenism as koinonia of diversities

As mentioned earlier, Orthodoxy offers itself as a 'practical' model for a future ecumenical reality, and not only as a model of unifying sacramental life, since *structurally* and *organisationally* it represents in fact a gathering together of communities which are informed by differing traditions, cultures, customs – aspects that are present to a degree in their Church life. Churches belonging to the group of Oriental Orthodox Churches celebrate different Liturgies, while remaining in communion, which was in fact the case for all of the traditions of the Orthodox Church in their early days. All Orthodox differing traditions are held together by the unity of sacramental life, and by a common love in communion, *koinonia*, and this could instigate a renewed vision of the unity that we seek. This unity should only eliminate differences in doctrine and understanding of the faith, but the differences in tradition and identity are to be maintained. While this paradigm may introduce a degree of confusion as to what pertains to doctrine and what pertains to tradition, it nevertheless remains a valid inspiration for a new vision of a united Christian reality.

This chapter will now address each of these possible new paradigms in turn, while continuing to follow the unifying theme or general vision that would make possible a plenary participation of the Orthodox in the ecumenical endeavour. At the same time,

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 225-226.

a new overall structure of ecumenism is envisaged which would enable a participation of all the Christian communities in the ecumenical project with full commitment.

4.3.1. *Journeying together. The ongoing engagement*

Metropolitan Kallistos strikingly starts his book on *The Orthodox Way* – a brief but comprehensive exploration of Orthodox Theology – by narrating an encounter between the fourth-century Egyptian Father, St Sarapion the Sindonite, and a famous reclusive woman who lived in a small room without ever going out. When St Sarapion asks her: ‘Why are you sitting here?’, she replies: ‘I am not sitting, I am on a journey.’³¹ Metropolitan Kallistos starts from these words further to develop the idea as a basis for an approach to Orthodox theology – or to any theological tradition for that matter:

Every Christian may apply these words to himself or herself. To be a Christian is to be a traveller. We are on a journey through the inward space of the heart, a journey not measured by the hours of our watch or the days of the calendar, for it is a journey out of time into eternity. One of the most ancient names for Christianity is simply “the Way”. It is a name that emphasizes the practical character of the Christian faith. Christianity is more than a theory about the universe, more than teachings written down on paper; it is a path along which we journey-in the deepest and richest sense, the *way of life*.³²

This vision of Christian life as journey brings a number of important implications, some of which are of great relevance to this study. First, as has been mentioned before, is the emphasis on the practical character of Christian life. Christianity is not only a theory or a philosophy, a set of doctrines or a system of beliefs, but it is a way of *doing* things, a manner of action, a fundamental praxis for human life. While this may seem rather self-evident, it is not by accident that Metropolitan Kallistos begins his exploration of Orthodoxy with this aspect. As the Orthodox tradition focuses obstinately on theologising often at the expense of more practical approaches – the Orthodox current feeble take on social assistance, for instance, may serve as an example in this case – the author felt the need to remind both the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox that at the core of Orthodox faith lies praxis and a way of living. Also telling is the fact that the particular case of the reclusive woman was used to exemplify that. For Orthodoxy may often seem, especially to the outside world, as a static, isolated tradition of immaterial meditation. Thus, this vision of an internalised journey emphasises that even in an apparently ‘motionless’ state Christians ought to be engaged in an internal journey, of active, searching reflection. It is at the same time a reaffirmation of the importance of praxis and a defence of the monastic, *hesychast* life of stillness, prayer and silence which is so central to the Orthodox tradition. The

³¹ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, p. 7.

³² Ibid.

implication is that even in the stillness of prayer the active, practical element remains essential and that the Christian life is not – or should not be – inert theory and theology.

Why is the image of the journey so important? Because it brings forth the continual character of Christian life, as a perennial quest for what remains essentially – during human life on earth – an unreachable goal. If in the Orthodox tradition the goal of Christian life is to attain deification, this sets the course of life on an ever-aspiring upward-ascending spiral. As a fundamentally eschatological concept – as it is only fully achievable in the *eschaton*, in the transcendental Kingdom that is to come – *theosis* remains constantly an aspiration, a process, a journey. Reaching this sort of union with God during earthly life is only possible to a degree. *Theosis* is not perceived as an appropriated ‘state’ that can be achieved and maintained, but rather like a continuous struggle towards perfection. This does not make deification an unachievable ever-distancing mirage, but a calling which constantly pulls us higher and turns our life into a ceaseless aspiration towards perfection.

Sacramental life in the Church is also a journey. The Liturgy of the Eucharist, wrote the seminal Orthodox author, Father Alexander Schmemmann, ‘is best understood as a journey or procession. It is the journey of the Church into the dimension of the kingdom [...] our entrance into the presence of Christ is an entrance into a fourth dimension which allows us to see the ultimate reality of life.’³³ Christian life mystically and continuously transports the faithful from an unsatisfactorily barren universe into a transfigured meaningful and rich reality. However, this sacramental gateway is ‘crossed’ and experienced only by one’s own efforts, by one’s commitment and active participation in the life of the Church.

There is an internal inherent connection between the concepts of Orthodoxy and deification. The Orthodox witness to the world, states the 1991 Report of Orthodox WCC Member Churches in Chambesy, ‘implies a continuous conversion of the Orthodox to a permanently purified Orthodoxy.’³⁴ It can be said that the quest for *theosis*, for an increasingly intimate life with God, represents indeed a quest for an increasingly purified Orthodoxy. From this perspective Orthodoxy itself appears as a continuous aspiration towards a perfect Christian life, and not something that can be fully ‘reached’ or ‘possessed’, an appropriated state or reality. This implication is, of

³³ Schmemmann, *The world as sacrament*, pp. 29-30.

³⁴ Report of an Inter-Orthodox Consultation of Orthodox WCC Member Churches, ‘The Orthodox Churches and the World Council of Churches’ (Chambesy, Switzerland, 12-16 September 1991). In Gennadios Limouris (ed.), *Orthodox visions of ecumenism* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), p. 194.

course, of utmost importance. With regard to the way Orthodox people see themselves, it is a reminder that Orthodoxy is not merely something that they have inherited, a wholesome reality in which they found themselves by fortunate birth, or an ultimate solution they have discovered by grace. Thus instead of 'relaxing' in the comfort of this comprehensive rich Orthodox universe that lacks nothing, the Orthodox faithful are called, on the contrary, to a sacrificial Christian life of full involvement and commitment that knows no rest.

In what concerns the way the Orthodox see themselves in relation to, or present themselves to other Christians, this view implies that the Orthodox, rather than summoning other Christians to join their Orthodoxy, should instead remind the Christian world that we are all called to a perfect Christianity as pure Orthodoxy, or to Orthodoxy as purified Christianity, according to their own understanding. As put by Riabykh, to achieve Orthodoxy is not something that the Orthodox only suggest for other Christians, but they also require it of themselves, with the proposal that all Christians embark on this journey together.³⁵

The risk for the Orthodox of settling on a vision of an inherited Orthodoxy, perfect and self-sufficient, a system of doctrines or a set of writings that contains within itself the fullness of Christ's truth is a major one indeed. As Metropolitan Kallistos stresses, Christ did not say 'I am Custom' but he said 'I am Life'.³⁶ Or, in the words of John Meyendorff, 'consistency does not imply repetition, but a living understanding – or *gnosis* – of the faith "once delivered to the saints," which must be rediscovered, reformulated and witnessed anew in the midst of historical change.'³⁷ Or, again, in the words of Staniloae: 'even the members of the Orthodox Church need to rediscover Orthodoxy as the very sap of the Gospel, the "daily bread" of the Revelation.'³⁸ To think of Orthodoxy as an acquired reality and not as progress, means to marginalise the essential significance of Christian renewal and (re)discovery, it runs the risk of giving the faithful the impression that their quest is over, to render them complacent and inactive. It is a view that also brings the danger of the Orthodox appearing – or becoming – arrogant, making them lose their sense of humility and repentance so necessary to their own metanoia, their own spiritual progress and transformation.

The tension between static inherited *tradition* and active 'living' *Tradition* (capitalising the word has represented for some time the way that Orthodox theology has often

35 Riabykh, 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Ecumenism', pp. 356-357.

36 Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, p 9.

37 Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church*, p. vii.

38 de Beauregard and Staniloae, *Mica dogmatica vorbita*, p 41.

chosen to mark this crucial distinction) is something this study has already identified earlier. The idea is that, in the Orthodox Church tradition ought not to be regarded as a static factor but as a dynamic reality. The words of Greek academic Panagiotis Bratsiotis are, again, particularly revealing: 'Loyalty to tradition does not simply mean slavish attachment to the past and to external authority, but a living connection with the entire past experience of the Church.'³⁹ The Church itself is seen as Tradition. In the view of Romanian Patriarch Daniel, this means that the Church is 'a dynamic process of continuity and renewal in the Holy Spirit, who bears witness to the crucified and risen Christ, throughout the ages, involving the human and historical dimension as partner in communion with the eternal Trinity.'⁴⁰ This Orthodox vision of T/tradition does not nullify, of course, the inheritance of the forefathers of the Church, the importance of which remains major as it sets an element of continuity and historical togetherness, but it adds the element that this inheritance needs to be continued, kept in motion or 'alive' through the life and involvement of present-day Orthodox faithful. The moment Tradition becomes seen as something belonging in the – more or less glorious – past to which the believers make constant but cursory reference, is the moment the Church becomes inert and 'secular'. Tradition is something that happens still and extends, through the work of the Church community, into the future.

However, if Orthodox life and faith are best represented by the image of a journey, is this not a journey only for the Orthodox? Why should the Orthodox be joined by, or seek the company of other Christians along the way? First of all, if the journey of Christian life has deification as its main direction this cannot remain a lonely road. According to Orthodox theology, the search for deification cannot be self-orientated, as the salvation of others is as important as one's own salvation. Indeed the Church as the community of the faithful has been described as a 'a communion of deification.'⁴¹ This communion of deification refers firstly to the proximate community of one's local Church, or – as is the case of the Orthodox Church – to the Eucharistic network of local Churches, but extends also to the outside world. According to this vision grounded in Trinitarian theology, 'mankind is one being but multi-hypostatic, just as God is One Being in Three Persons.'⁴²

Human beings come closest to their nature created in the image of God, when the same communion of love that exists between the persons of the Holy Trinity exists between

39 Bratsiotis, 'The Fundamental Principles and Main Characteristics of the Orthodox Church'.

40 Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, p. 157.

41 Mantzaridis, *The deification of man*, p. 57.

42 Sophrony, *His life is mine*, p 88.

them. According to the model of the Trinity, human beings should also be in a communion of ministry for and self-giving to one another. This communion in its deeper understanding is not restricted to an ecclesial reality alone, but to the entire humankind. That is why, ideally, the journey alongside Christ, towards an ever-perfect fullness of life with Christ, is a journey that should engage the entire humanity. There is essentially no part of humanity that can be excluded from this ontological Trinitarian mode of existence.

Moreover, to re-iterate once more an important point, the Orthodox Church sees its 'right', *orthos* character as a steady beacon for the world, a corrective reminder to the 'others' (*heteros*) about the purity of faith in Christ. It must not therefore remain content to engage in this fundamental journey, without aspiring to attract those outside its self-understood ecclesiological borders to join in, especially when a great part of this outside humankind shares, at least partly, in the same apostolic tradition of the Church. In the words of Staniloae, 'Orthodoxy proposes to all Christians a treasure belonging to all and which can serve as a basis for the renewal of all, even in the midst of the communities they may belong to.'⁴³

The image of a continual journey, of journeying together as *the* goal of the Christian life, brings to the fore also the idea of an ongoing engagement, of never becoming content with any status quo along the way. This does not mean that progressive achievements are not important, but they should never give the impression that the journey is over. (This emerged as a conclusion also when discussing the nature of ecumenism in an earlier section of this study.) This vision places ecumenism, or the aspiration towards the unity of Christian traditions in the same category as *theosis*, as it would no longer be viewed primarily as an achieved/achievable reality but as a continuous journey towards and alongside its internal goal. This view would oppose a programmatic ecumenism, working for the achievement of various stages of a clearly structured and defined plan.

Ecumenism is eternally in a 'pre-ecumenical' stage as the perennial task of theology to counter divisions in the Church. To say that ecumenism is not an achievable concrete state may sound like a disheartening statement, but ecumenism should be regarded as a tangible reality whenever the dynamics of an inter-Christian encounter or dialogue spring into action. Ecumenism exists and is an inner part of the Christian life and praxis. It is one of the core calls of theology – not a call to uniformity but to the unity in

43 de Beauregard and Staniloae, *Mica dogmatica vorbita*, p 41.

Christ. It is this awareness that the ecumenical actors, Orthodox or those belonging to other traditions, should strive to attain as their 'ecumenical goal'.

While there is a clear risk that the ecumenical endeavour may turn into a purely theological abstract process of philosophical musings extended ad infinitum, with no clear or quantifiable outcome, this view would nonetheless shift the approach from a result-based one to one based on community, where reflections are done corporately – in a way, like the newly introduced WCC 'decision-making by consensus' process, following protests from the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation against the voting system. This is inevitably going to be a much lengthier process, certainly before some form of visible unity is reached, but people involved in ecumenical encounters must be aware that centuries-old separations cannot be healed within one's lifetime. What one takes away from such an ecumenical participation is not concrete agreements, decisions and declarations, nor is he/she going to take away 'pragmatic' triumphs towards Christian unity, but the life-transforming, spiritually-renewing experience of having participated to a degree in what is the fundamental core of our Christian calling: the quest for unity. Even if there be no clear 'results' to mark an advancement (or decline) on the way, this vision would, nevertheless, avoid the deep, bitter and fundamental disillusionments which have marred the ecumenical movement in the past decades.

4.3.2. *Unity as core of Christian life and identity*

For Orthodox theology, the essential character of the unity of the Church is closely connected to the concept of 'catholicity.' Speaking about the catholicity of the Church as resting fundamentally on the Eucharistic event, the Orthodox contemporary theologian, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, emphasised that

the ultimate essence of catholicity lies in the transcendence of all divisions in Christ. This should be understood absolutely and without any reservations. It covers all areas and all dimensions of existence whether human or cosmic, historical or eschatological, spiritual or material, social or individual, etc. The dichotomies in which life has been placed and conceived, unfortunately to a great extent by Christian tradition itself, represent a betrayal of the catholic outlook so essential to the Church of Christ.⁴⁴

Zizioulas points here to the ontological importance of catholicity as the core aspect of the Church, actualized in the world through the mystery of the Eucharist (a thesis for which Zizioulas is well known). Zizioulas focuses on the relation between the 'local' and the 'universal' character of the Church. A community is geographically localized

⁴⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as communion*, p. 162.

in one place, hence the need for a local Eucharistic community. This community is connected to the universal Church, and reflects its universality, though it cannot consider itself catholic. Eucharist is for Zizioulas the event which bridges the local and the universal in the Church, it allows for the local Church to become universal, while at the same time allowing the catholic/universal Church to manifest itself in different localities.

The relevance of this view to the ecumenical context is in the intrinsic drive with which the Church seeks to be universal, as well as in the cosmic all-embracing character of its catholicity. Pursuing the same path of absolute enquiry, Zizioulas questions the existence of 'confessional' Churches, by which he appears to understand 'denominational Churches', including the Orthodox Church itself: 'The concept of the Church as a confessional entity (Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran etc.) is historically a late phenomenon and has come to complicate the ecclesiological situation to an alarming degree.'⁴⁵ He goes on further to ask: 'Has a confessional body per se the right to be regarded as Church? If the condition of ecclesiality is to be inseparably linked with that of locality, the answer is definitely negative. A Church must incarnate people, not ideas or beliefs. A confessional Church is the most disincarnate entity there is.'⁴⁶

This cursory look into Zizioulas' vision does little justice to the complex ecclesiological universe he has developed. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study it is important to note that the catholicity he is writing about is nothing less than *the* modality of existence of the Church,⁴⁷ and any attempt to introduce or justify divisions or confessional borders is an aberration or 'betrayal', and in a sense an ontological impossibility. It is necessary here to distinguish between 'division' and 'difference', and between 'catholicity' and 'uniformity'. A eucharistic catholicity would embrace all local Churches in the one body of Christ, while these in turn would embrace and 'un-divide' all cultural, social, anthropological differences in each given locality. Speaking of catholicity as reversal of division Sauca writes that 'the catholicity of the Orthodox Church, is not expressed as the sum of the different parts, but as the expression of the fullness.'⁴⁸ While catholicity may be seen as *multidirectional* or *holistic*, embracing the entire creation, history and space, living and dead – it is nonetheless a reality

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 259.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 259-260.

⁴⁷ In Zizioulas' words, 'The primary content of "catholicity" is not a moral but a Christological one. The Church is catholic not because she is obedient to Christ, i.e. because she does certain things or behaves in a certain way. She is catholic first of all because she is the Body of Christ. Her catholicity depends not on herself but on Him. She *is* catholic because she is where Christ is.' In Zizioulas, *Being as communion*, p. 158.

⁴⁸ Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 213.

converging toward a centre, represented by Christ, as undivided head of the Church, and not as 'disjointed' Christian reality.

This cosmic Christ-converging all-unifying catholicity as the essential aspiration of the Church extends inevitably outside what the Orthodox Church perceives to be its ecclesiological borders. The duty to achieve the visible unity of Christians is the same for all', writes Ciobotea, 'because love is a matter of identity for Christians. Divided Christianity is, first of all, an indictment for the Christians themselves, not only for the ones who directly caused the separations, but also for all those who are indifferent to the issue of unity or of communion with the other fellow human beings.'⁴⁹ Or in Sauca's words, quoted earlier, for an Orthodox to stop praying for the unity of all Christians is synonymous with a denial of his/her Orthodox identity, with a refusal to respond to Christ's prayer before His passions.⁵⁰

Moreover the unity mentioned in John 17 is, according to Anglican theologian and former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, nothing else but the 'harmonious movement [of the Son] into the Father which is the life of Jesus in eternity and in time.'⁵¹ Williams importantly identifies in this self-giving union of the Son in the Father the foundation of the very identity of the Church. In his words: 'unity is never simply the appearance of unanimity; it is never simply a matter of human agreement. It is most deeply, most fundamentally, what is happening in Jesus.'⁵² According to this vision the unity Christians seek is always the same unity of the Holy Trinity, the intrinsic communion of the Triune God. Not a unity which only facilitates human co-operation and harmony, but something essential and internal to the very fabric of the created universe, where all meaning, inspiration and joy are to be found. As put by Williams: 'When this extraordinary eternal movement of God to God becomes manifest in the human world, it is attractive; it draws the attention, the aspiration, the amazement and the delight of human beings.'⁵³

Understanding catholicity as what the Orthodox *are* as Christians brings the aspiration towards unity and any ecumenical endeavour closer to the intimate life of the Church, and turns ecumenism into a day-to-day concern for the life of all faithful, a matter of essential importance. Starting from Zizioulas' ontological prerequisite for Church

⁴⁹ Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, pp 59-60.

⁵⁰ See Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 224.

⁵¹ Rowan Williams, "'May they all be one"...but how? A vision for the future of Christian unity' - Ecumenical Conference Held in St Albans Cathedral on 17 May 2003. Accessed on 1 May 2014 at <http://sfes.faithweb.com/0305williamssummary.pdf>, p. 1.

⁵² Ibid., p. 1.

⁵³ Ibid. p. 2.

catholicity in relation with the entire humanity, world and cosmos, it can be said that ecumenism acquires all-embracing cosmic proportions. However, from a less theoretical, more pragmatic perspective it has as its first identifiable mission the re-attainment of the primordial Christian context in a state of non-division, a reality in which the communion in love (*koinonia*) can function fully and as a primary inspiration for the life of the whole world.

4.3.3. *Ecumenism as spiritual enterprise*

Ecumenism was painted at some length as a dynamic, spiritual reality in the previous chapter of this study. The main principles underlying this vision, however, need to be recalled at this stage as they now may contribute further to informing a new working paradigm for ecumenism. This research has affirmed that ecumenism is a *dynamic* reality which requires commitment and action, it is a matter of faith. It springs from spiritual life and is in effect a manifestation of love – the lack of which led to the divisions within the Church in the first place. Staniloae wrote that ecumenism is ‘a state, a reality in which the Holy Spirit urges the Churches to love each other, as their separation was not only an open conflict but also a lack of love.’⁵⁴

This study has suggested that ecumenism originates and occurs on a personal and inter-personal level, so to speak only of a programmatic, institutional ecumenism, and thus to ‘depersonalize’ it to a degree may lead to an incomplete understanding of the concept. In exercising its vocation of action and engagement, ecumenism does not break away from theology as an independent ‘specialist’ approach, but remains an integral part of theology. According to this vision, ecumenism remains inextricably linked to the spiritual components of Christian life – prayer, liturgy, transformation (*metanoia*). These dimensions inform a spiritual dynamic engagement which leads to a gradual and continuous transformation of the human being. This perspective also points to the fact, as has been stated in the section above, that ecumenism, as ‘mainstream’ theology, is a calling and a vocation addressed to all, and not only to a specialized few.

For the Catholic scholar Yves Congar, ‘ecumenism, presupposes a movement or conversion and reform co-extensive with the whole life of the community.’ For Congar, ecumenism requires ‘a profound moral and even religious conversion’ in oneself, in the process of which one becomes ‘a different person’⁵⁵ – a vision of ecumenism closely

54 Quoted in Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth*, p. 244.

55 Quoted in Avis, ‘Unreal worlds meeting’, p.424.

connected to the concept of *metanoia*, transformation. Romanian ecumenist Ion Bria's concept of 'the Liturgy after the Liturgy' reveals the fact that the Orthodox might be interested in placing the ecumenical endeavour within the reality of the 'second Liturgy' – that of concrete action inspired from and nourished by common and individual prayer, constantly anchored in the communion with Christ, and, through him, with the others. In fact, for Bria, 'the Liturgy after the Liturgy' model is seen as 'an inspiration and impulse for reconstructing the Church in history after the Eucharistic model and vision.'⁵⁶

Accordingly, this study has proposed the view that, when one enters into ecumenical activities and encounters, one must be aware that he/she needs to commit to this reality not only on a programmatic level, but also on a deeply spiritual level. Moreover, although an eminently participatory endeavour, ecumenism remains firmly anchored in the realm of theology and in close connexion with its spiritual components: prayer, liturgy, inner transformation. This means that ecumenical participation is as much about prayer as it is about dialogue and sharing and this type of spiritually-grounded ecumenism could constitute the beginning of a new paradigm, more suited for the twenty-first century: an ecumenism of faith and commitment.

However, as identified before, a tension arises here between the categories of 'trust' and 'suspicion'. For the Orthodox, to venture outside their comfort zone and outside their area of full trust often brings a crippling feeling of fear and suspicion. On the other hand, Protestant Christians view the full and whole commitment of a spiritual, liturgical, Church-centred kind – as that proposed by the Orthodox – with uneasy and suspicious eyes. Nevertheless, the paradigm of 'blind' trust and faith, although bewildering at first for all involved in the process, is becoming increasingly accepted.⁵⁷ This approach is far more difficult since it requires sacrifices of an 'ascetical' nature.⁵⁸ Such a form of commitment can only be nourished by faith in Christ and in the other fellow Christians. As Protestant scholar Gillian Evans suggested, we are required to take risks with our ecclesial identities and to patiently accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit when engaging in the ecumenical process.⁵⁹

The paradigm of a spiritual ecumenism would thus imply a shift from a cautious approach, from 'testing the waters'. Ecumenical partners ought rather to immerse

⁵⁶ Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy*, p. 87.

⁵⁷ Evans in *Method in ecumenical theology*, Cardinal Dulles in 'Saving ecumenism from itself', Murray, 'Receptive ecumenism and Catholic learning'.

⁵⁸ See note 159, Chapter 2.

⁵⁹ See Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 228.

themselves more fully into the ecumenical act of faith. There is a risk involved here, of course, and participants like the ones coming from Orthodox contexts would have to struggle greatly with their fear of losing their identity or betraying their inheritance. This would be however, an ecumenism linked and paired with the life of Church communities and with their sacramental life. It is an ecumenism that concerns every single member of the parish, and not a selected specialised class of theologians, whose work remains clouded in the 'external' sphere of diplomatic dialogue. Trust would thus rest on a different set of parameters which would sanction it to a different degree. While the idea of plunging into an ecumenical endeavour head-on, abandoning all suspicions and fears overnight, and relying solely on faith may be a feasible idea for many, this would have to be however a very gradual process, involving a careful and steady process of awareness-building in all the communities of the faithful around the world. Patience was identified in the previous chapter as a fundamental prerequisite for the ecumenical endeavour, and this shift of perspective towards the spiritual life would require it plentifully.

4.3.4. Ecumenism as koinonia of diversities

This study has presented a number of Orthodox perspectives which view the Orthodox 'federative' model of a gathering of local Churches and Orthodox communities as a possible model for a future ecumenical reality. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware wrote that 'the Orthodox Church is a family of sister Churches, decentralised in structure, which means that separated communities can be integrated into Orthodoxy without forfeiting their autonomy: Orthodoxy desires their reconciliation not their absorption.'⁶⁰ Metropolitan Kallistos also wishes to emphasise that the Orthodox do not 'demand the submission of other Christians to a particular centre of power and jurisdiction.'⁶¹ What is very interesting in this perspective is the opposition of the two terms 'reconciliation' and 'absorption'. 'Absorption' within one Orthodox jurisdiction or the Orthodox larger community is not desired by the Orthodox, but each Christian community is to keep its own autonomy – according to the current model of the Orthodox Church. The doctrinal sacramental unity of the various local Orthodox Churches means that differences in dogma and understanding of the faith would not be present, while the differences in tradition and cultural identity would be maintained.

⁶⁰ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 317.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Bulgakov also wrote in 1935 that conversion to Orthodoxy does not mean a form of 'ecclesiastical imperialism.'⁶² 'There does not even exist in Orthodoxy', he stated, 'a single ecclesiastical organisation that could be entered; the Orthodox Church is a system of national, autocephalous Churches, allied one with another.'⁶³ While Bulgakov acknowledges that 'individuals often join themselves to Orthodoxy by becoming members of one of the national Churches', what he sees as the only solution is 'that these communities, while preserving intact their historical, national and local characters, would draw near to Orthodox doctrine and life and would become capable of joining forces in the unity of the ecumenical Church, as autonomous or autocephalous Churches.'⁶⁴ Orthodoxy is again presented as a gathering of autonomous Churches, each with its 'historical, national and local character', but all united in a common doctrine and life. Bulgakov mentions only in passing here the difficulty posed by the current situation whereby individuals enter Orthodoxy by joining one of the national Churches, thus perpetuating a structure of separated jurisdictions and annulling to a degree the validity of this model of a federative but united Church where everybody maintains his/her identity. If people or communities from outside the Orthodox Church join not Orthodoxy but one of the local Orthodox Churches – with its own cultural identity and history – this would mean that that particular individual or community would in fact 'forfeit their autonomy'. Bulgakov dreams however of an Orthodox reality prepared to add new local Churches to its federative structure.

The Orthodox themselves are not keen on the idea of 'absorption' or amalgamation and each struggle with determination to maintain their autonomy. The 'autocephaly' of each Orthodox local Church is not seen as a compromise or imperfection, but, on the contrary, as a huge gift and achievement. Often an excess of enthusiasm in that direction has led some of the Orthodox Churches to veer at times towards 'phyletism' (a concept tackled in earlier chapters of this study). In any case, it cannot be said that the Orthodox are in any way in favour of the language of uniformity or sameness. This is an encouraging starting point having a strong doctrinal foothold in the Trinitarian doctrine, as will be seen, and a possible inspiration for the ecumenical context.

When asked during a lecture delivered at the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies in Cambridge about what an Orthodox response would be to today's perceived

⁶² Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 187.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

impasse of ecumenism, and what new paradigms of ecumenism could be identified from an Orthodox perspective, Orthodox priest and academic Ioan Sauca of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, Geneva, made a number of very interesting observations. Sauca recognised the need for a search for a new paradigm for unity, since the type of unity proposed within the WCC in the 60s, he thought, implied that all diversity should one day disappear, that Christians needed to discover a new kind of identity that would bring them together, but they would have to die gradually to their own identities. This kind of discourse, said Sauca, is no longer favoured by today's generation, as they prefer to speak of 'co-habitation' rather than of 'merging together.'⁶⁵ However, the Romanian theologian went further and presented a more concrete vision of what a new paradigm of ecumenism might look like, from an Orthodox perspective:

The Orthodox vision of unity has its particular nuances and has never been identical with that proposed in the WCC in the 60s (see the Orthodox declaration on Church and on unity made at the Third WCC Assembly in New Delhi, 1961). In the East, we spoke of *koinonia* of diversities rather than of the sort of unity where everyone will be the same. In the early days of the Church, each local Orthodox Church had its own liturgy, its own confession of faith (creed), its own expression according to its respective cultural background, yet they could recognise one another despite their diversity, as they were all sharing in the *koinonia* of witnessing the same apostolic faith. Similarly, if we look now to the Oriental Orthodox Churches (the pre-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches), they are in communion with one another, but they cannot celebrate together because they do not have the same liturgy. And the Eastern Orthodox Churches did not have the same Liturgy either, before the Empire - it was the Empire that gave us unity.⁶⁶

What Sauca argues in the quotation above is that there has been a long-standing tension in the ecumenical movement between the Orthodox understanding of unity and that proposed by the WCC in its formative years. The Orthodox response to the New Delhi WCC declaration on unity which Sauca mentions is indeed one of the turning points in ecumenical history, as the Orthodox made very clear their different vision of unity – despite the fact that the WCC document made use of the Trinitarian model and did not overtly propose a 'merged' reality for the Church as such. The Orthodox remonstrance referred mainly to what it largely perceived as a Protestant perspective whereby 'Christian Reunion, is usually regarded in terms of an interdenominational agreement or reconciliation'⁶⁷ without addressing what is for the Orthodox 'the basic ecumenical problem: that of schism.'⁶⁸ The Orthodox are again – and somewhat superficially – quick to label this vision as 'denominationalism', while

⁶⁵ Taken from a lecture delivered at IOCS, Cambridge, on the topic of 'The Church Beyond our Boundaries', on 12 May 2012. As yet unpublished. Quotation used with the permission of the author.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ New Delhi Statement on Unity, and Orthodox Response Third Assembly of the WCC, New Delhi, 1961. Accessed on the WCC website on 1 September 2013, <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/crete-02-e.html>

⁶⁸ Ibid.

at the same time accusing the ecumenical assembly of failing to perceive the Orthodoxy's 'special and exceptional position in the divided Christendom, as the bearer of, and the witness to, the tradition of the ancient undivided Church, from which all existing denominations stem, by way of reduction and separation.'⁶⁹ The Orthodox response also adds that 'from the Orthodox point of view, the current ecumenical endeavour can be characterized as "ecumenism in space", aiming at agreement between various denominations, as they exist at present. This endeavour is, from the Orthodox point of view, quite inadequate and incomplete.'⁷⁰

On the actual topic of unity, the Orthodox also asserted that their participation in the ecumenical movement in the capacity of 'witness which had preserved continuously the deposit of apostolic faith and tradition' would not imply any 'static restoration of old forms, but rather a dynamic recovery of perennial ethos'. 'Nor should there be a rigid uniformity', the Orthodox participants added, 'since the same faith, mysterious in its essence and unfathomable adequately in the formulas of human reason, can be expressed accurately in different manners.'⁷¹ Not that the WCC document had placed any particular emphasis on uniformity – it had, in fact, stated clearly that 'unity does not imply simple uniformity of organization, rite or expression.'⁷² However, one particular sentence had triggered the Orthodox mistrust. The document stated that '*the achievement of unity will involve nothing less than a death and rebirth of many forms of church life as we have known them. We believe that nothing less costly can finally suffice.*'⁷³ This image of a radical 'death' and 'rebirth' coupled with the vision of an already existing unity seeking to be made manifest,⁷⁴ and not an acknowledgement and reversal of 'schisms' caused the Orthodox to think that their vision of unity was significantly different.

Whatever the case may be, the Orthodox have felt again and again in ecumenical contexts the need to stress the importance of diversity within a communion 'healed' of divisions, as opposed to an 'existent' yet invisible diversity in community as proposed by the Protestants. Despite the rushed and convoluted context in which this vision was

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. My italics.

⁷⁴ The core statement of the New Delhi document reads: *We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.*

developed, it does remain a positive approach to the ecumenical picture, and it does point to an ecumenical reality where all actors – the Orthodox but also the other Christians ('called' to Orthodoxy) – retain their identity and autonomy. Sauca very helpfully presented a clear image of this model of ecumenism, grounded on a Scriptural/iconographic image:

In the Orthodox icon of the descent of the Holy Spirit you have the many Apostles but One Spirit; when the Holy Spirit comes, he comes as separate tongues of fire on each of the Apostle – not as some kind of 'cover', creating some sort of spiritual 'kolkhoz'⁷⁵ and forcing everybody together in unity. The unity brought by the Holy Spirit was giving different gifts to each of the apostles, and the unity between them was given by the *koinonia* of their different gifts. So this is what I think the Orthodox could bring: diversity in *koinonia* on the basis of this Apostolic image.⁷⁶

This vision of an ecumenical reality is particularly helpful. When speaking of diversity, Sauca refers to the different 'gifts' bestowed through the Holy Spirit on the Christian world, and, by extension, on the entire humanity. The connection with the Apostles is again particularly useful, as the Apostles came later to be associated with the various communities they have Christianized. The individual gifts they have each received, each transmitted to various communities, work together in a sort of beneficial and enriching 'complementarity' – as this study will soon identify when focusing on the Orthodox Trinitarian interpretation. Indeed this very image of diversity under and in the Holy Spirit is itself related to the Trinitarian model. This is undoubtedly the image which the Orthodox Church applies to its own internal tension between unity and diversity, and ultimately comes to see as beneficial this complementary plurality of gifts. This particular model of unity in diversity does not only see diversity as possible or acceptable, but suggests even that it is a strength of the Church community (or communities) which should be further sought and encouraged.

In the ecumenical context, this model can help the Orthodox themselves to view a future Orthodoxy that may include further Christian communities, to view therefore Orthodoxy as an 'open' structure that can benefit of an enlarged diversity and an extended catholicity. It can also stand as a positive constructive model for the wider ecumenical scene of a structure of diversity that need not imply 'a death and rebirth of forms of church life as we have known them', but a reconciliation on the basis of a common doctrine and life – a 'purified' Christianity, which for the Orthodox means nothing less than what Orthodoxy is, or rather what is called to become. This diversity will preserve intact the historical, cultural, national and local character of the many

⁷⁵ The Russian term for a collective farm in Soviet communist times.

⁷⁶ Sauca, 'The Church Beyond our Boundaries' – IOCS lecture.

Church communities, while succeeding to attain a plenary communion in Christ, ultimately around the sacramental reality of the Eucharist.

4.4. Reflections on the paradigms proposed above

4.4.1. Theology as aspiration

Theological reflection may attempt to describe what Orthodoxy is, or what ecumenism is, or what Church unity is, but it succeeds better at pointing to what all these realities could be, or, better, what they must become. Theology seems to direct people towards what things ought to look like, as things in human actuality are quite often far from perfect. It functions as the projection of potentiality – as aspiration. The Orthodox in particular insist – even in the most ‘hands-on’, practical, concrete situations – on a constant return to theological reflection, to philosophical thought, often to the exasperation of their Protestant peers in ecumenical encounters. The present theological exploration up to this point mirrors to a degree this aspirational character of theology, as well as the Orthodox obstinate insistence on holistic theology as the core of reference for all concrete action within the Church. It may appear that an approach constantly presenting an ideal reality against the very difficult and complex situations in the real world may not be the best course of action.

This is, however, an undeniable tendency of Orthodox theologians as they tend to focus on an *eschatological* vision of theology, of a perennially improved or deified reality, with a view to its final fulfilment and full revelation in the transcendent reality that is to come, in the *eschata* – the last things. Perfection is always sought, though the underlying understanding is that it will never be achieved in this world. While this may sometimes generate a lack of interest in current societal developments, in the order of the world as it is now, it nevertheless maintains theologians in a constant desire towards perfection – of life, of the world, of communing with God and with others. Theology sets the ground for further action, like a compass without which deeds and exploits become confused and insecure.

Somewhat similarly, participation in ecumenical endeavours, particularly from the Orthodox, needs to be grounded on a clear understanding of what ecumenism is, of what the Church of Christ is, of what significance Church unity carries. The Orthodox certainly need to have a clearer understanding also of what Orthodoxy means and what it requires and expects of them, a strong grasp of their own identity. This understanding needs to precede any ecumenical action, as it will inform and inspire any future interactions, and will offer a firm foundation for participation, in clarity and

confidence and not in uncertainty or anxiety. The ecumenical movement did not have the luxury to devote much time to such preparatory reflections in the troubled and tragic period surrounding the two World Wars when it began its fragile development. Much has been subsequently understood about the theological implications of Orthodox participation in inter-Christian milieux, yet the ecumenical process had been desperately rushed, and catching up with the ecumenical reality in the theological realm has become a rather awkward and unproductive experience for the Orthodox.

Also, some may argue that the ecumenical movement caught the Orthodox slightly unprepared and insecure about their own role in the contemporary world, about their self-understanding in an increasingly pluralistic world, about their self-perception vis-à-vis the other Christian communities. These are all essential aspects of an Orthodox self-understanding and the ecumenical challenge was undoubtedly beneficial for modern Orthodox theology. However, all these fundamental facets of theology require deep theological thought on the part of the Orthodox, and certainly some time before all visions become clear and coherent, before they are received by the various Orthodox communities. Things have not been helped, and are not helped still, by a seeming inability between the many local Orthodox Churches to carry out a dialogue or reach common visions, even of a theological nature, with regard to contemporary realities or challenges. Orthodox theology and identity has taken shape, it is often asserted, following the work of the Ecumenical Councils of the past, where a theological system was gradually revealed through theological debates that involved the whole Christian world, conciliarity being one of the core foundations of the (Orthodox) Church. Yet no further Orthodox 'Ecumenical Council', that would reflect at least today's world-wide Orthodox diversity, has taken place in over twelve centuries – and not for lack of fresh circumstances or challenges.

It is thus from this Orthodox 'aspirational' perspective that this study has tackled the issue of Orthodoxy vis-à-vis ecumenism, and also that of ecumenism itself, focusing more on what this reality should be rather than on what it actually is. Consequently, this exploration focuses less on what Orthodox participants and ecumenical actors should do in ecumenical contexts, but rather on what they should do *before* the ecumenical encounters actually happen, on their *pre-understanding* of Orthodoxy (in the case of the Orthodox), of ecumenism and unity. The reflections above constitute a preparation for ecumenical participation, a scene-setting for the ecumenical endeavour, a backdrop of guiding parameters, attitudes and visions. However the theological background does not mean, for the Orthodox in particular, merely a set of regulations

or principles, a 'theoretical' field of reference but rather participation and involvement – in the sacramental, spiritual and social life of the Church, in society at large, in the multifold inter-personal encounters. There should be thus no risk of this process becoming a formalised canonical exercise.

This study has proposed a number of paradigms – *Journeying together*, *The ongoing engagement*, *Unity as core of Christian life and identity*, *Ecumenism as spiritual enterprise*, *Ecumenism as koinonia of diversities* – that, if brought to the core of theological thought, would enable a fuller Orthodox participation and potentially a more efficient ecumenical process. However one cannot help but notice that these themes are all linked by a common theological thread, that they all refer to a more profound spiritual vision – the core, in fact, of Orthodox theology. They refer to what it means to be human and/or Christian, to what humans are called to become, to the way they live in relation to the world and to other fellow human beings. It presents life as *praxis*, dynamic and participative, continuously aspiring towards spiritual betterment, towards a fuller communion with other human persons.

This core is encapsulated in – and springs from – the doctrine of the Trinity, in the vision of God as a social relational being. It is, of course, understood that this vision of humanity as one multi-hypostatic being, according to the model of the Trinity should in fact guide all Christian life from deep within, certainly among the Orthodox who place such essential importance on Trinitarian theology. It may perhaps appear to be too abstract or 'philosophical' a theme for application in the field of ecumenism, of inter-Christian communion, which requires action and pragmatism. It is, however, a vision that ought to inspire all human interaction, and the encounter of the divided Christian world in particular could profit from it. The theological implications of this unifying underlying vision are many and complex.

4.4.2. *The consubstantial humanity*

When true to its own vocation, Orthodox theology only dabbles in the theoretical realm, with a view to applying its findings to the practical everyday life of the Church community. The great Romanian theologian Dumitru Staniloae attempted to do just that: to introduce the deepest theological concepts into the everyday understanding of faith. Here is how he describes in very visual and almost poetic terms a Trinitarian-based vision of humanity, where all humans are connected by ray-like threads:

[...] threads lead out from each person towards all other persons, and these threads can be made actual through direct relations or they can remain at the level of potentiality only. Like a star, every person is the centre of endless rays, and through their rays

persons are joined together as in a huge net of mesh. Through their rays they both give and receive, and in this way their rays are something they have in common, while the persons themselves remain distinct centres of those rays which go out from them and come towards them. Within this mesh each person is the centre of as many actual threads as there are persons in relationship with him, and the centre of so many virtual or potential threads as there are persons who could be brought into relationship with him. Moreover, each person can function as centre in relation to any other person at all, and so this netting of mesh grows continually from within itself, one part passing, another being added on, as the mesh comes to resemble a sphere of greater and greater density.⁷⁷

This imaginative three-dimensional vision is not to be seen only as poetic projection of theological doctrine, but it is itself the very theological model on which the whole Christian thought system is based. In its perfect, deified state, humanity would resemble a dense mesh-sphere of interconnections, with every human being interconnected and gaining plenitude of life more and more through his/her relations with the other human beings. This is not a vision where humans become one in the sense that they melt into one another into some amorphous whole, but it reflects a community which maintains the individuality of each person, their distinctive role in the global unity.

This is also a model based on the structure of the Holy Trinity, on its inner dynamic of mutual inter-relation, the 'circular movement' (*perichoresis*) of 'each divine "I" around the other as centre.'⁷⁸ The Persons of the Trinity are three, 'yet each regards only the others and experiences only the others'.⁷⁹ It is a rotating dynamic of full self-giving or 'ministry' of each divine person to the other two, a constant aspiration towards the other. It is the picture of *koinonia*, the communion in love, of which Orthodox participants in ecumenical contexts speak so much and which Sauca also used as an image for Christian unity – *koinonia* of diversities – based in his case on the related Apostolic image of the Holy Spirit descending as 'individual' tongues of fire on each of the Apostles, in the form of different and distinct 'gifts'

The Trinitarian picture represents love in its sublimated form, but this is essentially what Christians are called to achieve, particularly, perhaps, from the point of view of Orthodox theology. It is the structure on which human beings were created, not 'in the image of any element of this world, but in the image of God.'⁸⁰ Humanity itself is no less than 'a plurality of persons within a unique nature and within a total communion. That is why the state of love between the human persons is the only state that

⁷⁷ Dumitru Staniloae, *Orthodox dogmatic theology: The Experience of God, Vol. 1: Revelation and knowledge of the Triune God* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005), p. 254.

⁷⁸ Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, p. 88.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, p. 69.

corresponds to their nature created in the image of God.’⁸¹ The whole humankind is in fact one multi-hypostatic being, just as God is one Being in three Persons – as was expressed earlier by 20th century spiritual father Archimandrite Sophrony.⁸² This is a description of the Church community – or indeed the world community – in its global understanding as one being in a multitude of persons. However, very importantly, this plenitude of human love, the full actualisation of the one multi-hypostatic being represented by the community of the Church, and ultimately of the whole world, can only happen inasmuch as this love is all-encompassing, inasmuch as it is truly catholic. In Ciobotea’s words, ‘the authenticity and the perfection of love resides in its catholicity (i.e. to love all people) or in its Trinitarian transparency: the diversity of persons does not oppose the unity of nature.’⁸³ Consequently, any lack of catholicity implies an imperfection in inter-personal love, a failure to reflect appropriately the divine structure of supreme love, a fundamental distortion in human *koinonia*. This is how catholicity too is seen as having its source and justification in the life itself of the Triune God. However, surfacing again and again is the understanding that ‘the diversity of persons’ remains unaltered and does not conflict in any way with the notion of consubstantial unity.

One person, in Staniloae’s view, cannot be described only through his/her individual attributes, or by what the others rationally know about him/her. A person ‘also exists in a relation with others, and also has something from others.’⁸⁴ ‘I know there is a connection’, writes the Romanian theologian, ‘between me and my wife, between me and my children, yet I also know myself as different, and this is where reason lies. But I cannot understand what the mystery of the connection between me and others is.’⁸⁵ A human person is defined thus also by his/her relationships with his/her fellow human beings, yet this dimension is rather more difficult to define as it carries an unquantifiable mystical or sacramental element. Staniloae goes further, and, in another of his writings, states that ‘in every man [...] I must see manifested in a different way, a way that is a complement to my own way, the same source of being which is also revealed in me. Therefore I must rejoice in all those gifts of his which I do not have, and in all his successes, while he must also extend the benefit of his own gifts and

81 Ibid.

82 See Sophrony, *His life is mine*, p 88.

83 Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, p. 69.

84 Sorin Dumitrescu with Dumitru Staniloae, *Șapte dimineți cu părintele Stăniloae (Convorbiri)* (Bucharest: Anastasia, 1992), p. 61. My translation.

85 Ibid.

successes to me, or to express it in another way, the same source that is manifested in him is also my own. This is our human consubstantiality.⁸⁶

Staniloae employs here the concept of 'human consubstantiality' of obvious Trinitarian extraction and attempts to explain how the Trinitarian concept of 'perichoresis' – mutual indwelling, or 'interpenetration' – would work in a human community context. The emphasis on *complementary* is particularly useful as it brings to the fore a 'practical' interpretation of this 'consubstantiality', which does not only represent an ontological way of living, a calling for humans to return to their built-in divine image or structure, but a beneficial sharing of gifts within the community, a joyful exchange of each other's competencies. It is an achievement-oriented dynamic image wherein humans do not merely exist in communion, but they continuously act by influencing, inspiring and helping each other towards further successes.

These 'successes', however, are not entirely their own. Zizioulas writes that 'from the fact that a human being is a member of the Church, he becomes an "image of God", he exists as God Himself exists, he takes on God's "way of being"'.⁸⁷ Yet, 'this way of being is not a moral attainment, something that man *accomplishes*. It is a way of *relationship* with the world, with other people and with God, an event of *communion*, and that is why it cannot be realized as the achievement of an *individual*, but only as an *ecclesial* fact.'⁸⁸ According to this vision, the Church represents an 'existential', essential part of human life, and any life that lacks an 'ecclesial' dimension is consequently seen as deficient or incomplete. For indeed 'human consubstantiality' is not merely a model or a parallel mode of existence to the Trinitarian one, but it is in fact inextricably connected to the life of the Holy Trinity. In the words of Romanian Patriarch, Daniel Ciobotea:

... the Church in its quality of Icon of the Holy Trinity is not built-up as an icon, in parallel or independently of the Holy Trinity, but as participation in the Trinitarian life and as shining (reflection) in the world of this participation. [...] Therefore to become a Christian means to re-establish or to commence the communion with the Holy Trinity. The Christian is a person in communion with the Holy Persons of the Holy Trinity. This state was prepared for us by Christ by his Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Ascension to Heavens (Ephes. 2:6; John 14:3).⁸⁹

The above reflection wonderfully and clearly defines the Christian as a person in communion with the Trinity. The mechanics which have made possible the participation of humanity – itself seen as consubstantial unity of many individuals –

⁸⁶ Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, pp. 81-82.

⁸⁷ Zizioulas, *Being as communion*, p. 15.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, p. 71.

but also of each individual member of the Church in the life of the Triune God, has been prepared, arranged and set in motion by Christ. Members of the Church are thus 'Trinitarian' to the same extent that they are 'Christian'. The sphere of the human loving communion follows the rotation of the Trinitarian circle as in a cosmic device, whereby the Trinity, as structure of love in communion brings and keeps everything in life and existence. As the same Patriarch Daniel expresses it, 'the Church in its quality of a medium for the restoration of humans in the communion of love with God and with each other, cannot have other source or other model than the Holy Trinity'.⁹⁰ This is ultimately the role of the Church: that of restoring the communion of love between humans by bringing them into communion with the life of the Trinity. The Church is the platform or the way that unites the reality of the Triune God with the reality of humanity.

It may be argued that the model of the Holy Trinity constitutes ultimately a philosophical abstraction of certain benefit for theological reflection but less useful for pragmatic action on pastoral or ecumenical ground. In the less-than-ideal imperfect divided world this could never actually be a 'working', applicable model, for the 'actual' life of Church or human communities. This model does spring, however, from Christ's own example when he prayed for the unity of the Church: 'That they may all be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us' (John 17:20-21), which gives it a special authority in Christian theology, where it acts as the underlying core of all doctrine. The Orthodox often come to see the doctrine of the Trinity as synonymous with their social doctrine or to any societal commitment or approach of the Church. Ciobotea quotes the Russian 19th century thinker Nikolai F. Fedorov's words: 'the dogma of the Holy Trinity is our social program.'⁹¹ While this may be essentially a hyperbole, it does point to the fact that the Trinitarian model constitutes the beginning of any theological endeavour in Orthodox understanding, including Church action in the practical realm. This model as spark and motor of theological dynamics in Orthodox understanding is excellently presented by the same Staniloae:

As something simultaneously revealed to us and yet transcending all understanding, the doctrine of the Trinity constitutes the foundation, infinite reservoir, power and model of our growing eternal communion; yet it also spurs us on to grow and think continuously in spirit, and helps us both pass continually beyond any level we may have already

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 67.

reached in our personal communion with God and among ourselves, and also strive for an ever more profound grasp of the mystery of supreme communion.⁹²

The Trinitarian model and the experience of the Holy Trinity in the life of the Church through the sacraments is what 'spurs' humans on to progress in spirit, to continuously convert themselves, again and again, to an ever purified form of Orthodoxy. Moreover, humans are expected to surpass any status quo, any 'given' or 'reached' state; there is no level that can be achieved, without the expectation that one has to go even further. Human life, like that of God, is a continuous, eternal movement. What do humans move towards? What is the ultimate vision of 'purified Orthodoxy'? Nothing else than to engage in the sacramental work of the Church, to apply all their commitment and energy in order to grasp more and more the 'mystery of supreme communion'.

To rewind a little, this study has come to address and reflect on the deep implications of Trinitarian theology by following the very internal logic and dynamic underlying the proposed complementary paradigms, which aimed to offer a glimpse into a new starting vision for Orthodox participation in ecumenical contexts. The thread underlying these perspectives was felt to be an internal dynamic that directed everything towards movement, participation, and unity in communion. This thread expresses and is informed, this study has identified, by the model of the Trinity and by all 'communitarian' theology springing from this model. If there be a journey, it is made eternal by the continuous ceaseless rotation of Trinitarian self-giving. It cannot be a journey in isolation, but only in and aspiring towards communion – as God himself is communion, and not a singular entity. It is a journey made by participating in God's life, by entering the life of the Holy Trinity; therefore, it is a journey deeply connected to the ecclesial life of the Church, deeply rooted in its sacraments. As a journey, the ultimate goal of which is a perfect state of communion, it is centred around the unifying sacrament of the Eucharist. It is a journey in which each member of the Church participates individually, never losing his/her identity, irrespective of how closely knit together the human community is to become. Also, and crucially, it is a journey that does not stop at any level, but surpasses any limit, border or barrier, temporal, geographical, social or psychological. This is, or should be the underlying essential drive of all Christian life.

This does not mean that by embracing this model all barriers are suddenly and automatically to disappear, but that this fundamental inner drive carries Christians ever farther, in a constant aspiration to transcend all borders. Any limits preventing a

⁹² Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, Vol. 1, p. 247.

full communion or catholicity of Christ's Church are an aberration, which Christians are to acknowledge but never justify or perpetuate. The image of God in humans reaches its plenitude only inasmuch as the catholicity of the Church is further increased and perfected. Communion with the other members of the Church, and, beyond, with any human being, is not what humans do or achieve, nor is it only what they are called to achieve – it is what humans *are*. The existence of every single Christian, or human being, for that matter, outside the communion with others, outside a plenary participation in the 'human consubstantiality' is ultimately deficient, according to the Trinitarian vision, the essential doctrine of the Orthodox Tradition.

Unsurprisingly, when reflecting on paradigms for Orthodoxy and ecumenism, the inner dynamic of the Trinity came to underlie all aspects of this vision. From an Orthodox understanding, the role of ecumenism is to heal divisions in the body of the Christian world, to facilitate a communion that would enable a shared ecclesial life of all Christians, a shared unifying Eucharist. Orthodox theologians have often insisted in ecumenical encounters on the importance of Trinitarian doctrine. The model of the Trinity of a *koinonia* of diversities and a calling for a catholicity of love seems to be a logical image for the meeting of the world's Christian communities. This is not a model in the sense that – to paraphrase Fedorov – 'the dogma of the Holy Trinity is the Orthodox ecumenical program.' It should be, however, the starting point of all Orthodox theology, particularly in ecumenical contexts. Nor should it merely constitute a 'mental' picture, a 'philosophical' projection, but a state, an attitude based on an active 'reaching out', on genuine prayer and humility, on patience and perseverance. An attitude which is active in faith, as God Himself is outreaching action and a Breaker of barriers. An attitude which is prayerful and humble, as it involves a transformational transfigurative endeavour based on the encounter with the Trinity, through Christ, in the sacramental life of the Church; patient and persevering, as all aspects of Christian life – deification or *koinonia*, even Orthodoxy and ecumenism – are not breakthroughs or accomplishments, but ongoing processes, ever-aspiring towards perfection.

CONCLUSION

1. The study

The main purpose of this study has been to explore the tension between the Orthodox Church and the ecumenical movement by addressing, primarily, the theological understanding that the Orthodox have of themselves, of Church unity and of other Christians. I have also explored the ecumenical phenomenon itself and some of the views (not necessarily Orthodox) of what ecumenism represents and some ideas regarding its methodology. This study has aimed to identify a new starting point for the ecumenical endeavour: a new perspective or set of paradigms that would enable the Orthodox (but also other Christians) to approach the ecumenical encounter from a different angle. This new perspective returns to certain principles and visions that are central to Christian theology.

The motivation of this exploration has been a context of hostility and intolerance, sometimes extreme, which some groups within the Orthodox Church have manifested towards ecumenical or inter-Christian encounters, one which has marred or even prevented a genuine dialogue between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christian communities. Such an attitude is not shared by Orthodox communities in their entirety, yet it has been strong enough to be reflected to varying degrees in official statements of the Orthodox Churches issued in ecumenical contexts. It has also influenced to an extent the involvement of most Orthodox participants in ecumenical milieux. Research on this theme has been limited up till now since it runs counter to a prevailing attitude in Orthodox circles that attempts to avoid or marginalise this topic as inflammatory, or even by the Church establishment as an attack or betrayal.

In the course of my research I have collected data in the form of a significant number of definitions, views and opinions which together have depicted particular contexts and situations relevant to this study. In exploring these sources, I have sought to uncover views, established or new, with regard to the wider themes of Orthodoxy and ecumenism, without starting from any a priori hypotheses. An exception has been, of course, my starting premise that new reception paradigms are necessary to enable a deepened and renewed understanding of the way the Orthodox themselves view Orthodoxy. But I also seek to enable a novel picture of ecumenism of greater clarity and credibility both for the Orthodox and for all other ecumenical participants.

Identifying and understanding such new approaches could not be done in practical terms without a thorough investigation both of Orthodoxy and of ecumenism, and also

not without analysing, as thoroughly as possible, the way these theological realities interact. While each of these tasks would be ample enough to warrant a series of studies of its own, I have addressed each of them in turn, as this was the only way to explore both the Orthodox-ecumenism tension and to recognise other possible paradigms and interpretations. Hence, I have allocated a great portion of my research to an analytical exploration of the themes of Orthodoxy and ecumenism, and these constitute the first two parts of my study. I have then addressed, in the third part, the theological vision occasioned by and informing Orthodox interaction with the ecumenical movement. Finally, in the fourth and final part of the study I have sought to outline paradigms for Orthodoxy and ecumenism that would enable a more effective ecumenical endeavour.

2. Orthodoxy and the Orthodox

The first part of my study began by briefly exploring the historical appearance of the terms 'Orthodox'/'Orthodoxy' and their subsequent development, from their emergence as a reaction to heresies during the period of the early Ecumenical Councils, to the point where they came to define the Eastern part of the Great Schism, 'Orthodoxy' becoming a party term distinctive from 'Catholic'. This etymological approach has revealed the 'antinomic' character of the term 'Orthodox' appearing as it did so as to establish a scale between 'correct' and 'erroneous'. The vision of a flawed non-Orthodoxy has gradually extended its significance, starting from non-Chalcedonian groups following the Fourth Ecumenical Council (451), moving on to the Latin 'Catholic' branch of the Church, and settling nowadays to signify nothing less than the rest of the Christian world.

However, when addressing the Orthodoxy versus non-Orthodoxy antinomy, my study has revealed a tendency to disconnect the term 'Orthodox' from the period of the early Councils and from its implied connection to 'non-Orthodoxy'. Orthodox theologians seem often to seek a deeper core of their Orthodox identity beyond the intrinsic and constant association with heresy or heterodoxy. This willingness to identify Orthodoxy as something 'with a life of its own,' less circumstantial and conditional on historical conjunctures has often led to an attempt to paint Orthodoxy as a category fundamentally connected with faithfulness to Christ's truth. Some theologians have been driven to deem Orthodoxy as 'the contents and the substance of the Church'¹, or

¹ Staniloae quoted in Botsis, *What is Orthodoxy*, p. 8.

even to equate it with Christ, who is himself Truth: 'Christ is incarnate Orthodoxy.'² This understanding of Orthodoxy still keeps an anchor in the faithfulness-unfaithfulness antithesis.

The first consequence of such an interpretation of Orthodoxy (on the one hand antinomic to heterodoxy, on the other hand pertaining to the very essence of the Church) is that the Orthodox see their Church as the one Church of Christ, whereas other Christian communities are seen as outside the Church. What the Orthodox see as their unbroken faithfulness to the early Church of the Apostolic age has led them to see themselves in an intrinsic uninterrupted connection with the one Church established by Christ. Since the Church of Christ can only be 'one Church' and not 'several Churches', the Orthodox take it that the existence of a plurality of Churches in today's context is not a sign of internal schism, but an external deviation or aberration. In other words, by seeing the Church as one and in practice impossible to divide (there being only one Christ who draws all people into communion with Himself), the Orthodox seem unwilling to acknowledge schisms as divisions within the Church, but see them as 'departures' of various groups throughout history from the main body of the Church.

As a community, the Orthodox Church regards itself as centred essentially around its sacramental life and, in particular, around the Eucharist. Without that intimate connection with Christ which the sacraments enable, fullness of life within the Church is compromised. This vision is closely linked with what the Orthodox see as the pre-eminent goal of Christian life, *theosis* or deification. The aim of deification is to become one with God, to acquire a mystical participation in the life of the Holy Trinity, and the whole Church community is seen as a 'communion of deification'.³ Such a goal cannot be realised without the faithful being constantly informed, inspired and nourished by direct communion/communication with Christ through the sacraments. The sacraments are the only elements that ensure unity in the Church community, and this tenet further justifies and enables the Orthodox conviction that the unity within their Church has never in fact been compromised. It also informs the way Orthodox see themselves in regard to those other Christian communities with whom it does not share the sacrament of the Eucharist (as a consequence of divergent doctrinal views), and whom it sees as not sharing a parallel view of what constitutes and signifies a sacrament. To reach a point where Eucharistic community would be shared by all

² Botsis, *What is Orthodoxy*, p. 5.

³ Mantzaridis, *The deification of man*, p. 57.

Christian communities is often seen as the ultimate sign that Christian unity has been restored. In Staniloae's words, 'without accepting an intimate unity with Christ, the unity of the Church herself cannot be reached, as unitary body and as the one bride of Christ.'⁴

However, if the Orthodox Church sees itself as a continuation of the Church of the Apostolic age and a guardian of its truth and ethos, this inheritance is not to be seen as merely a depository of tradition (though the risk of that remains ever-present). Such an inheritance must be seen as a dynamic engagement in the life in Christ and the community of the Church, one that continues the experience of the forefathers of the Church, whilst bringing past and present communions together. This dynamic experiential aspect is directly informed by the concept of theosis, which defines human life as an aspiration towards perfection through constant active participation within the sacramental and societal life of the Church. Such an understanding of Tradition (often marked by the use of a capital T) reveals all life within the Church as a dynamic, living and 'breathing' reality, constantly informed by the work of the Holy Spirit and immersed within the life and structure of the Trinity.

That Christian life is seen as a process directed towards deification further defines Orthodoxy as something that is not inherited but needs to be appropriated by praxis. Such an understanding more than anything presents Orthodoxy not as practice or doctrine in contradiction to other doctrines or practices, but as a way of life focused on constant and profound participation. It is a life in which both liturgical and societal involvements carry sacramental weight, where the mystery of encountering Christ through the Eucharist is complemented by the mystery of encountering Him and interacting with Him through our fellow human beings. 'The sacrament of the altar' is continued by and fulfilled in the 'sacrament of the brother.'⁵ This is to present an image of a dynamic, ever-active Orthodoxy that rests on the sacramental life of the Church, from whence it radiates and expands further and further into the community and the wider world. Such a model of Orthodoxy is particularly important for a renewed understanding of the ecumenical movement and of the role Orthodoxy might play in it.

3. *Ecumenism*

When this study in its second section approached the theme of ecumenism, it began by offering a brief survey of the recent history of the movement, focusing on its origins, its initial aspirations, and then its development during its first decades. From the time of

⁴ Staniloae, *Teologia dogmatica Ortodoxa*. Vol. II, p. 277.

⁵ Bria, 'The Liturgy after the Liturgy', p. 20 (paraphrasing St John Chrysostom).

the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, to the Faith and Order and Life and Work Conferences (these two subsequently merging into the World Council of Churches), and up until the Anglican 'Appeal to All Christian People', my study charted a path of the ecumenical movement that was mainly Protestant. This process was not (as the Orthodox sometimes imply) informed merely by some pragmatic attempt to make Western and Anglo-Saxon expansion and missionary endeavour more efficient, but was permeated by a genuine desire towards unity and renewal, in a spirit of humility and honesty. As chronicled, for instance, by those who witnessed the seminal Edinburgh conference, participants were possessed by a genuine prophetic energy and 'emotional excitement', without being overly naive or idealistic. The early ecumenists displayed an appropriate amount of scepticism and a critical attitude towards imperial and governmental policy.

In very much the same spirit, the Orthodox were conducting their own attempts of rapprochement between the Christian Churches. A 1920 Encyclical issued by the Patriarch of Constantinople that envisaged the creation of a 'League of Churches' is seen by many scholars as one of the 'birth certificates' of the ecumenical movement. As early as 1902 the Ecumenical Patriarchate had already approached other Orthodox Churches to explore the possibility of resuming a dialogue with the Western Churches, so the 1920 Encyclical cannot be seen as a purely opportunistic initiative. On the other hand, it would be naïve to argue that the Orthodox Encyclical was not influenced by troubled times in the wake of the First World War, by rising nationalism, and by ethnic divisions within the Orthodox Church.

The two World Wars, even if enormously debilitating, did not crush such early hopes and aspirations but, on the contrary, gave them renewed strength and determination. After the unthinkable atrocities of the two World Wars, it became increasingly clear that unity and co-operation among the Christian Churches, as well as a rediscovery in togetherness of the Christian message of oneness and love, were now crucial and central requisites. Forged in so paradoxical a context, which changed abruptly between hope and calamity, from unity close at hand to murderous divisions, from progress and stability to apocalyptic angst, the World Council of Churches emerged immediately after the Second World War as the much-sought-after universal platform for all the Churches. Given this particular historical context, it was imperative that the WCC should appear and function and as a matter of priority.

Central platforms for dialogue, co-operation and reconciliation were required at all levels. For the Orthodox Churches the particular threat had been that of *phyletism*, a current of thought that brought nationalism into ecclesial matters and created a confusion between concepts of Church and nation – a ‘heresy’ that had been tacitly accepted in the Orthodox world for some time, and one which had an association with nationalist fascism in a number of Eastern European countries.

The ecumenical movement found its impetus for development in being part of a process of repentance, one that envisioned a renewal in faith. However, after the intermittent yet hasty initial development of the World Council of Churches, the ecclesiological understanding of such ecumenical endeavour became somewhat forced and ‘cosmeticised’. One such instance can be found in the seminal Toronto Statement of 1950, one of the first documents to lay the theological foundations of WCC, which stated, on the one hand, that ‘the member churches recognize that the membership of the Church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own church body.’⁶ Yet on the other hand, the same document emphasised that ‘membership [of the Council] does not imply that each Church must regard the other member Churches as Churches in the true and full sense of the word.’⁷ If this kind of ‘schizophrenic’ interpretation was certainly of use in the early days of the ecumenical movement, such ambiguity ceased later to be constructive, as neither the Orthodox nor the Roman Catholics ever ceased to think of themselves as the one true Church. The notional possibility of ‘non-Churches’ within the Christian world has delayed a frank and decisive understanding of ecumenism by the Orthodox Church, and also arguably amongst the Roman Catholics.

After this brief historical excursus, I sought to place ecumenism in its theological context. I noted that ecumenism was primarily a quest for unity, and that this basic underlying vision derived from Christ’s command that ‘all be one’, so making unity an essential calling and vocation of the Church, of crucial importance for the fate of humankind, since without this unity, the world ‘would not believe.’ I noted that, from an ontological point of view, related to the very existence of Christ’s Church, Christ is the Great Unifier, gathering and reconciling all people and all things unto himself.⁸ In

6 ‘The Toronto Statement’, The World Council of Churches, accessed on 1 March 2012, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/toronto-1950/toronto-statement.html>.

7 ‘The Toronto Statement’.

8 See Colossians, 1:19-20.

consequence, separations and divisions in the Church of Christ are fundamental contradictions and betrayals of the very core and nature of the Church.

My research then identified ecumenism as a spiritual state, never divorced from prayer. The implications that Jesus prayed for the unity of the Church are of great importance. Ecumenism began at a spiritual level, through prayer, and can be only maintained through the same prayerful communion in love. Nevertheless, if ecumenism is to be seen as a spiritual enterprise, this does not confine it to a detached, reflective, philosophical sphere. Ecumenism is expected to be fundamentally action, praxis. A number of definitions quoted in this study describe ecumenism as a 'movement', a 'mode of action', a 'process', a 'dynamic concern', a 'renewal', a 'reform'. Ecumenism is understood as a dynamic and active enterprise, a renewal-centred journey, operating in the practical, participatory sphere of personal active involvement. More than a programme or organisation, ecumenism is something that 'happens to the soul of Christians'.⁹ In other words, ecumenism is a mission that starts at a personal level with each member of the Church, akin to their 'pastoral' or 'societal' mission within the Church. Yet, this mission of the faithful expands ever further, from an inter-personal level, to the level of the parish, and then further out to the level of the wider Church community, and further still to the global compass of the entire Christian world.

From this exploration of ecumenism my research reached a number of conclusions. My first conclusion was that ecumenism must be seen as a permanent calling to all theology and as an ongoing process. If theology has always pursued a constant path toward advancing unity and countering separations – something that this study has proposed as the ecumenical core of theology – then indeed it has been ecumenical since the early centuries of the Church. Moreover, because (as Congar puts it) 'to discover what unites us is the permanent task of theology,' this endeavour has not ceased today, nor is it ever likely to stop.¹⁰ Treating contemporary ecumenism as 'pre-ecumenism', this study proposed that any ecumenical endeavour must be, to an extent, 'pre-ecumenism', since it searches, precedes and anticipates an ecumenical plenitude. As this plenitude is to be sought perpetually in its utmost perfection, ecumenism will be ever active, as a pre-condition of keeping the Body of Christ as one.

Addressing a possible methodology for ecumenism, my exploration focused primarily on the importance of a 'pre-methodology', of a 'frame of mind' that should inform the

⁹ Oliver S. Tomkins quoted in the entry on 'Christianity' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

¹⁰ Congar, *Dialogue between Christians*, p. 21.

immersion of ecumenical actors in ecumenical contexts. Such a preparatory methodology should place a great importance on 'long enduring patience' since, in Congar's words, this would counter the 'impatience and violence' that generated 'schism and heresy' in the first place.¹¹ Gillian Evans identifies 'fear, resentment and hopelessness' as 'the three ecumenical vices' that are to be conquered in order to enable a real ecumenical process.¹² One of the main tasks of the ecumenical participant is to negotiate a path past the 'trust-suspicion' polarity, a resolution central to the theological enterprise. Making room for an initial approach to ecumenism in trust is the only way forward for a plenary ecumenical operation, despite all the risks and sacrifices that implies.

4. Orthodoxy and Ecumenism

The third part of my research focused specifically on the interaction between Orthodoxy and the ecumenical movement. Since the Orthodox relation to ecumenism is often referred to as a 'problem' or crisis, I attempted in this part of my study to present this dilemma and the associated Orthodox rationale, which revolves around the strong Orthodox belief that the Orthodox Church is the 'one, holy and catholic' Church. This simple rationale follows a clear-cut logic: the Orthodox Church is the one, true Church of Christ, and, since there can be only one Church of Christ (as there cannot be several Churches of Christ), the Churches that are not Orthodox are outside the one true Church. Reunion of Christians would implicitly mean re-joining the one true Church – the Orthodox Church. Ecumenism, as a move towards reunion of Christians, can therefore only mean the re-joining of and reunion with the Orthodox Church.

As the mere participation of the Orthodox in ecumenical meetings has often come under attack in the Orthodox world, I then proceeded to address a number of characteristic anti-ecumenical views, examining their perceptions and arguments. In general, anti-ecumenists tend to accuse Orthodox participants in ecumenical circles of conceding too easily to the dominant 'Protestant ethos'. They argue that this has led to a 'diluted' expression of genuine Orthodox ecclesiology, and to the presentation of two contradictory views: on the one hand to an affirmation of the Orthodox Church as the One, True Church, but on the other, to an acceptance of a 'plurality' of Churches as part of the Christian world. It is often implied that such contradictions may lead to a rupture or schism within the Orthodox Church or may compromise its integrity.

¹¹ Quoted in Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 218.

¹² Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 226.

While most Orthodox theologians, including anti-ecumenists, would agree that no such catastrophe has yet occurred, a more radical faction within the anti-ecumenical camp would argue that such schisms have already been imposed on the Orthodox via the ecumenical platform, a favourite example being the adoption of the new calendar (Gregorian), which has 'divided' the Orthodox into 'old-calendarists' (still following the Julian calendar) and 'new-calendarists'. Such positions tend to be buttressed by conspiracy theories that often imply some 'secret' involvement of the Orthodox hierarchy. As for the non-Orthodox, these are described by the extreme anti-ecumenical groups as perilous 'heretics', who aim (as they always have done) to corrupt the purity of the Church. To introduce the language of 'heresy' does not merely suggest disagreement on theological or doctrinal matters, or even mean that the respective 'heretical' groups have gone outside the Church: it has the effect of branding them as 'enemies' and, moreover, as devious adversaries. Such 'heretics' become an amorphous, malignant mass, threatening the truth of faith and thus the salvation of all the 'righteous'. They cease to be seen as our neighbours, our fellow Christians; they become non-persons, and hence any form of compassionate or humane approach is precluded. It is a legitimized instance of theology ceasing to be pastoral.

Since Orthodoxy is thus identified once again, with the concurrence of many important theologians, as the only possible 'way of life' for a unified Church, I proceeded in this part of my study to examine briefly what are perceived as deviations from the doctrine of the (Orthodox) Church. I examined 'The Thyateira Confession' as an Orthodox document which, uniquely, goes in some depth into enumerating the errors of non-Orthodox traditions. The main and most important of these errors is seen to be a loss and neglect of Holy Tradition (seen as the 'sacred source' from which spring the Sacraments, the Apostolic succession, the honouring of the saints and their relics, the sign of the cross and everything else related to Orthodox life). In addition, to this general omission, the Confession refers more specifically to the interruption of Apostolic continuation, to the predilection for a purely scholarly interpretation of the Bible, and to significant differences in the understanding of the Eucharist. This last complaint refers particularly to the concept of 'transubstantiation' and the distinction between 'the essence and the accidents', which are held to run the risk of 'equating Christ with an abstract meaning and not with a reality.'¹³

13 Kokkinakis, *The Thyateira Confession*, p. 63.

I continued my analysis of Orthodox theological writings that deal with ecumenism by approaching another very important and singular document, the Russian Orthodox Church's 'Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox', a rare instance of an Orthodox Church issuing an official and systematic statement with regard to other Christians. This document is a mature expression of a theology accustomed to deal in 'paradoxes' and 'mysteries', moving back and forth between a readiness to understand, and an avoidance of excessive tolerance in matters of faith; between God's *oikonomia* (since no one can assess the level of 'Orthodoxy' in any given denomination), and undisputed certainty, when it comes to the fullness of truth; between a flexible understanding of today's complex reality of a 'divided Christendom', and a rejection of today's solutions and directions for unity; between a static paradigm of Orthodoxy, waiting to be discovered, and a dynamic one which reaches out further. This document's presentation of today's lack of Church unity as a common responsibility for all Christians yet a particular task for the Orthodox is of the utmost importance. It is argued that, if Church unity has been lost and needs to be restored, this duty belongs primarily to the Orthodox. If the Orthodox have retained a model and structure for the unity of the Church, they have also laid on them the enormous responsibility of witnessing it to the entire world.

If the Orthodox Church sees itself as the Church (the very same now as it was in the early Apostolic age), it does nevertheless seek the unity of the entire Christian world. Its call does reach outside of what it perceives to be the limits of the Church, since it understands its catholicity as cosmic, extending to the whole of humanity and creation. Moreover, the Orthodox Church does acknowledge some special status together with a degree of 'participation in Orthodoxy' for those Christian communities which once belonged to the primordial Church.

I further reflected in my study on the fact that, when it comes to Church unity, the Orthodox do not see this as anything other than the reconstitution of the One True Church. The Orthodox vision of unity in the catholicity of the Church draws a fine line between 'diversity' and 'plurality', because, despite catholicity being seen as multidirectional yet holistic (encompassing the entire creation, present and past, living and dead), it is not understood as 'the sum of the different parts, but as the expression of the fullness' of the Church.¹⁴ The Orthodox Church argues itself to be a model for such catholicity in diversity. While the autocephalous national Orthodox Churches

¹⁴ Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 213.

remain distinct, each with its own cultural ethos and inheritance, they do share a common sacramental, liturgical and eucharistic life which ensures their fundamental unity. The existence of a number of Orthodox local Churches (in the plural) should be seen as confusing to a degree, given the Orthodox insistence on Church fullness. The correct nomenclature and understanding should refer to the Orthodox Church in various localities ('The Orthodox Church in Russia/Bulgaria/etc') and not to Orthodox Churches which are somehow 'national' ('The Russian/Bulgarian Orthodox Church').

My reflections next addressed the fact that often the Orthodox Church sees other Christians as somehow 'outside' the One Church, their 'Christian' character being 'incomplete' or even, according to some extreme interpretations, 'null'. In an attempt to avoid this potential theological cul-de-sac, my exploration approached the 'open conciliarity' perspective originally presented by Staniloae, according to which the non-Orthodox 'are not completely outside this sacramental mystery which is the body of Christ, the Church.'¹⁵ According to this model, as put by Sauca, 'all Christians belong to the same reality, the only difference being the level of their participation in that reality.'¹⁶ Such a perspective, based on participation, moves the discussion to a different plane, to matters of involvement, action and development. Indeed, attaining Orthodoxy is, according to Father Philip Ryabykh, an official of the Russian Church, 'something that the Orthodox not only suggest that others attain, but they also demand it of themselves.' Developing this insight, the Orthodox 'propose that other Christians also embark on this path and that we can work together on this way.'¹⁷

A last important aspect of my research addressed in this third part was to argue that the Orthodox Church sees its role in the Christian world as 'special' and prophetic, since it alone has remained the faithful carrier and witness of the full truth of faith, and so has the task of calling back all stranded Christian groups to the one original Church. By describing itself as 'Orthodox' and by rejecting other Churches as flawed and incomplete, so placing them outside the sphere of the Church, Orthodoxy can be seen as performing a 'pedagogical' function, since it is implicitly giving other Christians a clear directive as to where real unity and truth are to be found. Moreover it can be then claimed that the truth of the Church has been preserved unchanged with the purpose not only of preserving the fullness of Christ's truth for the salvation of its local communities, but also to render the Church a 'seed', a 'matrix', a durable paradigm

¹⁵ Quoted in Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 221.

¹⁶ Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 223.

¹⁷ Riabykh, 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Ecumenism', pp. 356-357.

that will allow separated non-Orthodoxy to return to the structures, ethos and doctrine of the original Church of apostolic times.

The role of Orthodoxy thus is not merely to preserve the truth of faith, but also to preserve it for the sake of the reunion of Christianity back into its original mould - understood to be the Orthodox Church. This might explain to a degree the 'passionate' reaction the Orthodox often have to ecumenical contexts, where they find themselves treated merely as one Christian group among others, and often feel themselves a minority, despite seeing their call as to witness to the very 'structure' and 'key' of Christian unity, as preserved within the Orthodox Church.

5. New Paradigms

Finally, in the fourth and last part of this study, I sought to identify and outline paradigms for Orthodoxy and ecumenism that would enable a more plenary ecumenical operation, with a different ethos and changed parameters, especially as regards the participation of the Orthodox Church. The section began by re-addressing what appears increasingly to be a fundamental tension in the vision that the Orthodox have of themselves in relation to other Christian traditions. On the one hand, there is distrust and indifference towards whatever is located outside the Church. On the other, there is the huge responsibility and mission of keeping the structure and tradition of the original Church of Christ, as a salvific platform for an eventually reunited Church and for the whole of humankind. Safeguarding this inheritance is a matter of identity for the Orthodox and they see their role as of crucial importance.

Such a contradiction ends up incapacitating the Orthodox in living their own identity and so performing their fundamental mission and calling. A novel approach is very necessary vis-à-vis the way the Orthodox understand Orthodoxy in relation to the rest of the world. My study has proposed that, if the Orthodox often find themselves today in a position of 'reserved conservatism', they ought to shift their perspective to one of 'active metanoia'. The 'reserved conservatism' position implies a denial that there was ever a separation between large communities of Christians, instead insisting that the Orthodox Church was abandoned by groups of 'schismatics' or 'heretics'. This view also implies that everything, including the original unity, has been preserved in the Orthodox Church, since the unity in Christ can never in fact be altered. But by so doing, such an approach places on the non-Orthodox the entire need and responsibility actively to seek to regain the Orthodoxy of the early Church.

A new working paradigm for Orthodoxy of 'active *metanoia*' as proposed by this study implies a shift of stance allowing for a more transforming and repentant approach to Church unity. Whilst still maintaining the premise that the unity of the Church means a return to the spirit of the primordial catholic/universal Church, the new vision would propose a new set of principles or paradigms. My research has identified a number of central themes for reflection: *of journeying together and of the ongoing engagement, of unity as core of Christian life and identity, of ecumenism as spiritual enterprise, and of ecumenism as a koinonia of diversities.*

When reflecting on the *journey together*, I focused on an image of 'journey' that would describe and define both the realities of Orthodoxy and ecumenism. A traditional 'journey' metaphor for Orthodoxy and the early Church, 'The Way', faithfully renders the continuous and eminently dynamic nature of faith, its character as a progress, and the necessarily action-based quality of Christian life. Very importantly, the call to Orthodoxy is addressed primarily *to the Orthodox*. It is not an admonition addressed only to the non-Orthodox, for that might give the Orthodox a false presumption that their own call to Orthodoxy had somehow been fulfilled and no further action from them was required. Ecumenism too should be seen as an ongoing journey, a constant aspect of theology, since its goal has been and will always be to 'maintain unity and to counter division.'¹⁸

My proposal has been that the reality of Orthodoxy should be seen in association with the concept of *theosis*/deification. If the calling of the Orthodox can be seen as a 'continuous conversion of the Orthodox to a permanently purified Orthodoxy,'¹⁹ then this same quest is that envisaged by *theosis*, which directs all the faithful towards an increasingly intimate life with God in the Holy Trinity. Like deification, Orthodoxy is a continuous aspiration towards a perfect Christian life, and not something that can be fully inherited, 'reached' or 'possessed' – an appropriated state or reality. Moreover (and most importantly), according to Orthodox theology the search for deification cannot be self-orientated, as the salvation of others is as important as one's own salvation. The Church as the community of the faithful has been described as a 'communion of deification'.²⁰ This communion of deification refers first to the proximate community of one's local Church, or, as is the case of the Orthodox Church, to the eucharistic network of local Churches, but extends also to the wider world. Such

¹⁸ Evans, *Method in ecumenical theology*, p. 19.

¹⁹ Report of an Inter-Orthodox Consultation of Orthodox WCC Member Churches, 'The Orthodox Churches and the World Council of Churches', in Limouris, *Orthodox visions of ecumenism*, p. 194.

²⁰ Mantzaridis, *The deification of man*, p. 57.

a vision is grounded in Trinitarian theology, seeing mankind as 'one being but multi-hypostatic, just as God is One Being in Three Persons.'²¹

This vision of a continuous journey places ecumenism, as the deeply felt aspiration towards the unity and catholicity in the whole Christian Church, in a category akin to *theosis*. Ecumenism should no longer be viewed primarily as an achieved/achievable reality, but as a continuous journey towards and alongside its internal goal. Such a view would oppose any programmatic ecumenism, working for the achievement through various stages of a clearly structured and defined plan. Ecumenism has been earlier identified as being eternally in a 'pre-ecumenical' stage, since the perennial task of theology is to counter divisions in the Church. The fact that ecumenism is not presented as an 'achievable' state may sound disheartening, but ecumenism should be regarded instead as both real and accomplished whenever the dynamics of an inter-Christian encounter or dialogue come into action. Ecumenism exists and is an inner part of Christian life and *praxis*, it is one of the core calls of theology calling all humanity to catholicity in Christ.

I then addressed the theme of unity as core of Christian life and identity. While the 'duty' 'to achieve the visible unity of Christians is the same for all', as said by Romanian Patriarch Daniel, this is because 'love is a matter of identity for Christians.'²² In the words of Orthodox scholar Father Ioan Sauca, 'he who will stop praying for the "unity of all" is denying his own Orthodox identity'.²³ My study has also brought into discussion the views of the contemporary Greek theologian, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, who emphasises the ontological importance of catholicity as a core aspect of the Church, actualized in the world through the mystery of the Eucharist.²⁴ Of particular relevance to the ecumenical context is the intrinsic drive with which the Church seeks to be universal, as well as the cosmic all-embracing character of its catholicity. The catholicity of the Church is understood as what the Orthodox/Christians *are*, as their very identity, which brings the aspiration towards unity and any ecumenical endeavour closer to the 'intimate' life of the Church. Ecumenism, as an aspiration towards catholicity, becomes a day-to-day concern and a matter of essential importance for the life of all the faithful.

Whilst approaching the theme of spiritual ecumenism, this study further suggested that ecumenism originates and occurs on both a personal and an inter-personal level,

21 Sophrony, *His life is mine*, p 88.

22 Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, pp 59-60.

23 Sauca, 'The Church beyond our boundaries', p. 224.

24 See Zizioulas, *Being as communion*, pp. 158-169.

so that a programmatic, institutional and 'depersonalised' view of ecumenism is incomplete. Ecumenism does not depart from theology when it is performing its calling of active engagement but remains an integral part of it. Ecumenism should remain inextricably linked to the spiritual components of Christian life (prayer, liturgy, *metanoia*), and this dynamic spiritual engagement should lead to a gradual and continuous transformation of the human being. Hence, ecumenism, being nothing else than 'mainstream' theology, is a calling and a vocation addressed to all the faithful and not only to a specialized few. Ecumenical participation is as much about prayer as it is about dialogue and sharing, and such a spiritually-grounded paradigm would perhaps be better suited to the twenty-first century, proposing as it does, above anything else, an ecumenism of faith and commitment.

This vision would imply a total personal commitment to the inter-Christian encounter, in full trust, and would require an abandonment of any 'trust-suspicion' polarity. Unconditional trust may, of course, incur significant risks, while plunging into the ecumenical reality yet abandoning all suspicion seems a very difficult state to achieve. However, this study has proposed that, since this ecumenical paradigm would be linked and paired with the life of Church communities and with their sacramental existence, trust would rest on a different basis. Such ecumenism would concern every single member of the parish, and not only a selected and specialised class of theologians, whose activity has been one of 'external' or 'diplomatic' dialogue.

My study then proceeded to address the paradigm of unity as a *koinonia* of diversities. A number of Orthodox perspectives have already been presented that propose the Orthodox 'federative' model of an assembly of local Churches and communities as a model for a future ecumenical reality. Referring to a possible integration of non-Orthodox communities into the Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware emphasised that 'Orthodoxy desires their reconciliation not their absorption'.²⁵ I have particularly identified the antinomy 'reconciliation'-'absorption' as very important, since the Orthodox (and no doubt other Christian bodies) deeply resent any idea of a merged uniformity. The Orthodox greatly value their principle of federated autocephalies/autonomies and are each keen to preserve their cultural and ethnic character. It can thus be argued that the Orthodox understanding of an ecumenical unity in diversity is informed by their own varied context and experience.

²⁵ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 317.

Sauca proposes an image of diversity grounded on the Orthodox iconographic depiction of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, not as an amorphous mass, but as separate tongues of fire on each of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit is received as individual gifts which work together in a beneficial and enriching 'complementarity', an image ultimately related to the Trinitarian model. This is the image which the Orthodox Church applies to its own internal tension between unity and diversity, and this complementary plurality of gifts is seen itself as a great gift and benefit for the Church.

Such a vision is of particular importance to the ecumenical participation of the Orthodox, since it enables them to envisage Orthodoxy as an 'open' structure that can benefit from an enlarged diversity and an extended catholicity. This sort of diversity would preserve intact the historical, cultural and local character of the manifold Church communities, while attaining a communion centred around the sacramental reality of the Eucharist. The model can also constitute a constructive vision for the wider ecumenical scene since it proposes a structure of diversity that need not imply 'a death and rebirth of forms of Church life,'²⁶ but rather a reconciliation on the basis of common doctrine and life.

6. *The Thesis*

When reflecting on the above themes, I identified an important common theological thread which links them, in that all these themes relate to a more profound spiritual vision, to what it means to be human and/or Christian, to what humans are called to become, to the way they live in relation to the world and to their fellow human beings. This underlying and overarching vision presents life as *praxis*, something dynamic and participatory, continuously aspiring towards spiritual betterment and a fuller communion with other human beings, and springs from a theological understanding of the Trinity, from the vision of humanity as one 'multi-hypostatic being'.

According to a model proposed by Staniloae and presented in this final section of my study, humanity in its perfect deified state would resemble a dense mesh-sphere of interconnections, with every human being interrelated and gaining an increasing plenitude of life through his/her relations with other human beings. This model is based on the structure of the Holy Trinity, on its inner dynamic of mutual inter-relation, the 'circular movement' (*perichoresis*) of 'each divine "I" around the other as

²⁶ 'New Delhi Statement on Unity, and Orthodox Response'.

centre.²⁷ Furthermore, since, as Ciobotea puts it, 'the authenticity and the perfection of love resides in its catholicity', this implies that any lack of catholicity involves an imperfection in inter-personal love, a failure to reflect appropriately the divine structure of supreme love, and therefore a fundamental distortion of human *koinonia*.

Staniloae employs the concept of 'human consubstantiality', whereby he attempts to project the Trinitarian concept of 'perichoresis' (mutual indwelling, or 'interpenetration') into a human context. Staniloae speaks of each person rejoicing in the gifts and successes of the others, a mutual human 'complementarity', a beneficial sharing of gifts within the community, a joyful exchange of each other's competencies. However, this way of relating to other human beings, this event of communion, cannot be realized as the achievement of an individual, according to Zizioulas, but only as an *ecclesial* fact.²⁸ The Church represents an 'existential', essential part of human life, and any life that lacks an 'ecclesial' dimension is consequently to be seen as deficient or incomplete. It needs to be emphasised that 'human consubstantiality' is not merely a model or a parallel mode of existence to the Trinitarian one, but is in fact intimately connected to the life of the Holy Trinity. In Ciobotea's words: 'Church in its quality of Icon of the Holy Trinity is not built-up as an icon, in parallel or independent of the Holy Trinity, but as participation in the Trinitarian life and as reflection in the world of this participation.'²⁹

Thus, if Orthodoxy is a journey, it is made eternal by the continuous ceaseless rotation of Trinitarian self-giving. It cannot be a journey in isolation, but only in and aspiring towards catholicity in communion. It is a journey made by participating in God's life, by entering the life of the Holy Trinity. Therefore it is a journey deeply connected to the ecclesial life of the Church, deeply rooted in its sacraments. It is a journey that does not stop at any level, but surpasses any limit, border or barrier, temporal, geographical, social or psychological. This is understood to be the fundamental essential drive of all Christian life.

This Trinitarian image is not a model in the 'literal' sense; it is not, as it were, an actual ecumenical 'programme' or 'methodology' of the Church. It should represent, however, the starting point of all Orthodox theology, especially in ecumenical contexts. Nor is it merely a 'mental' picture or a 'philosophical' projection, but a state, an attitude based on an active 'reaching out', on genuine prayer and humility, on patience

²⁷ Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, p. 88.

²⁸ Zizioulas, *Being as communion*, p. 15.

²⁹ Ciobotea, *Confessing the truth in love*, p. 71.

and perseverance. It is a permanent state that involves a transfigurative enterprise based on the encounter with the Trinity, in the sacramental life of the Church.

It was therefore the thesis of this study, after interpretation of all the information uncovered by scrutiny of the themes of Orthodoxy and ecumenism, and of the interaction between Orthodox theology and the ecumenical reality, that it is necessary to define and implement new Orthodox paradigms for approaching ecumenism as an ever-enlarging catholicity, bringing to the fore the common theological core of both realities, the concept of 'human consubstantiality' derived from Trinitarian theology. According to this concept, Christian life has as its main direction an unceasing motion towards an ever-fuller, ever-wider human communion based on the Trinitarian dynamic in which each of the three Persons communicates with the others in a continual rotation of self-giving, love and ministry.

The question that has underpinned and motivated this research project has been: *Why* do the Orthodox participate in the ecumenical movement, and *how* can they negotiate an involvement in the ecumenical movement, together with their non-Orthodox counterparts - considering that the Orthodox see their Church as the one and only Church? The answer proposed is that the Orthodox should participate in ecumenical encounters because they see their aspiration towards a constantly out-reaching communion with their fellow consubstantial humans as their very life and identity as Christians and as human beings, according to the model of the Triune God. Attempts towards communion can be sustained if they rest on that 'sacramental' (not 'sentimental') love which is fuelled by a full and continuous immersion in the liturgical life of the Church. The fact that the Orthodox see their Church as the only true Church should not deter them from joining ecumenical encounters, but, on the contrary, should motivate them even more, since alongside this great privilege of membership runs also the heavy and unique responsibility of gathering together the whole world into the one Body of Christ.

7. Possible directions

It was not the remit of this study to suggest concrete actions or methodologies for either Orthodox participation in inter-Christian contexts or for the ecumenical processes in general. The theological conclusions I have reached above have as a main purpose the sketching of a theological background for Orthodox participants in ecumenical operations, the framing of a mind-set, an awareness or an attitude in preparation for an ecumenical exposure. Since however many of the difficulties

identified in this research point to deficiencies in theological discernment and acceptance, certain directions of action appear implicit and I will make here a brief mention of the most obvious.

It is hard to speak in the Orthodox world of an 'official position' or even of a unified voice among Church leaders, yet the various ministers of the Church need to become more aware of the necessity to reaffirm Orthodoxy, as often as possible, as a calling to constant renewal, to an ever-purified life in Christ. This would counteract a tendency in the Orthodox world to view Orthodoxy as something inherited and reserved for the benefit of selected nations, somehow seen as 'a chosen few'.

The present times also require a renewed emphasis on the catholicity or universality of the Church as an essential component of faith. This sense of expanding communion starts at the level of the local community, though it should not stop there but continue unabated into the wider Christian world, and even beyond. This is nothing else but the unstoppable and crucial mission of Christ's Church to bear witness to the whole world, both to those who are near and to those who are far off, of the beauty and completeness of Christian life, and to do so in a spirit of brotherly self-giving, even of sacrificial love. The Church hierarchy has the important role of ensuring that the faithful have a complete and correct theological understanding of the Christian catholicity of love, grounded in the Trinitarian model. Thus the faithful will lovingly approach other Christians in the full knowledge of Christ's truth, and not by employing a diffuse sentimental approach, as feared by some writers against ecumenism.

The Church hierarchy should also discourage the language of 'heresy' and 'heretics', which is employed all too often by writers or speakers of a harsher temperament. This does not mean that criticism of other Churches should be discouraged, but that any critical engagement needs to remain as far as possible anchored within the pastoral realm of theology. My research has shown that talk of 'heresy' often degenerates into a discourse about 'us' and 'them', where 'them' (the heretics) are presented as an amorphous yet malignant mass to be despised and avoided at all cost. If other Christians are indeed long-lost brothers, the Orthodox should not repudiate any pastoral concern towards them, but should keep alive the hope that one day we will all share again in the Eucharist of Christ.

The Church should also, whenever possible, make clear its stance towards other Christians, according to the model of the Russian Church, with its 'Principles of

Attitude towards Other Christians'. This message needs to be communicated to and shared by the entire Orthodox community. After all, if the hierarchy of an Orthodox Church maintains such 'external' relations with other Christian traditions, it is right that these relations should be known, understood and endorsed by the communities of local Orthodox Churches.

If the message of the Orthodox Church is that it is the one true Church, then its oneness must appear compromised by an increasingly nationalist character of the various Orthodox Churches, who are united by a doctrinal theological bond (often confined, alas, to the theoretical realm), but have otherwise few significant contacts. Indeed, it was the ecumenical movement of Protestant origin that brought the Orthodox Churches together in the last century, rather than these Churches assembling of their own accord. The Orthodox hierarchy in various places needs to take a stand against this separation in the Orthodox world, which has been further enhanced by nationalistic feelings, and must place their emphasis on the oneness and unity of the Orthodox Church. The existence of several ethnic Orthodox Churches (sometimes within the same country) is dangerously close to the Western 'branch theory' which the Orthodox have vehemently condemned. The organisation of a long-awaited pan-Orthodox council could constitute a first step in reaffirming the catholicity of Orthodoxy and would bring to the fore the essential conciliar matrix of the Orthodox Church. Progress has been made recently, as, at the instigation of the Ecumenical Patriarch, an Assembly of the Primates of the local Orthodox Churches have agreed to convene a Holy and Great Synod in Constantinople in 2016, with a pre-Council Conference to take place in 2015.³⁰

As for the ecumenical movement itself, all participants involved in ecumenical contexts, Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike, need to remain aware that such processes have a long-term character, perennial in fact, and no one should expect immediate achievement in the form of decisions and common positions or statements. This perspective could usefully be affirmed and emphasised prior to any ecumenical encounter. It should be affirmed that each and every inter-Christian meeting happening in a spirit of genuine love and honesty and in responsibility to Christ's truth is in itself an ecumenical achievement. There will, of course, always be agendas and pursued objectives, directions for dialogue and established programmes, but these

³⁰ See 'Primates of local Orthodox Churches celebrate Liturgy at the Cathedral of St George in Phanar on the Sunday of Orthodoxy' on the official website of the Russian Orthodox Church. Accessed on 2 May 2014 at <https://mospat.ru/en/2014/03/09/news99336>.

should not, in themselves, be motivating ecumenical encounter. Rather, such meetings should happen as an extension of the life of all Christians, as an integral part of who they are called to be, a joyful and responsible communion which has as its purpose the constant enhancement of Christian love in catholicity, according to the supreme model of the Holy Trinity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Lawrence E. 'The WCC at Canberra: which spirit?' *First Things* (June 1991 issue). Accessed on 1 May 2013. <http://www.firstthings.com/article/1991/06/005-the-wcc-at-canberra-which-spirit>.

Allen, J. J. *The Ministry of the Church: Image of Pastoral Care*. New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986.

Allchin, A. M. *The Abbé Paul Couturier: apostle of Christian unity*. Westminster: Faith Press, 1960.

Aram I. 'The ecumenical movement at a Crossroads'. In *Ecumenical Review* 47 (1995):472-478.

Barnes, Patrick. 'Ecumenist "Double Speak"'. The Ecclesiological Schizophrenia of the Orthodox Ecumenists'. Accessed on 17 October 2007. <http://www.Orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/doublespeak.aspx>.

Bartholomew (Ecumenical Patriarch). *Encountering the Mystery. Understanding Orthodox Christianity Today*. New York: Doubleday, 2008.

de Beauregard, Marc-Antoine Costa with Staniloae, Dumitru. *Mica dogmatica vorbita. Dialoguri la Cernica (Short spoken dogmatics. Dialogues at Cernica)*. Sibiu: Deisis, 2000.

Bennett, Zoë, and Porumb, Razvan. 'Studying Pastoral Theology in an Ecumenical Context'. In *JATE* 8.1 (2011) 38-52.

Bennett, Zoë. *Incorrigible Plurality: Teaching Pastoral Theology in an Ecumenical Context*. Contact Pastoral Monograph, 2004, No.14.

Bria, Ion. *The Liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission and Witness from an Orthodox perspective*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996.

Bulgakov, Sergius. *The Orthodox Church*. Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988.

Butler, David A. R. *Dying to be one: English ecumenism--history, theology and the future*. London: SCM Press, 1996.

Cavarnos, Constantine. *Ecumenism Examined*. Belmont: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1996.

Christensen, M. & Wittung J. (ed). *Partakers of the Divine Nature. The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition*. Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007.

Chryssides, George D. *Christianity Today*. London: Continuum International Publishing, 2010.

Ciobotea, Daniel (Metropolitan). *Confessing the Truth in Love*. Iasi: Trinitas, 2001.

Congar, Yves. *Divided Christendom. A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion*. London: The Centenary Press, 1939.

Congar, Yves. *Dialogue between Christians. Catholic contributions to ecumenism*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966.

Congar, Yves. *Ecumenism and the Future of the Church*. Chicago: Priory Press, 1967.

Coniaris, Anthony. *Introducing the Orthodox Church*. Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing, 1982.

Davey, Colin. 'Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue'. In *One in Christ*, 20 (1984), 346-64.

Dulles, Avery (Cardinal). 'Saving ecumenism from itself'. In *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, 178 (Dec. 2007).

Dumitrescu, Sorin and Staniloae, Dumitru. *Șapte dimineți cu Părintele Stăniloae (Convorbiri) (Seven mornings with Father Staniloae – Conversations)*. Bucharest: Anastasia, 1992.

Ellis, Christopher J. *Together on the way, A theology of ecumenism*. London: The British Council of Churches, 1990.

Evans, Gillian R. *Method in ecumenical theology. The lessons so far*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Evdokimov, Paul. *Ages of the Spiritual Life*. Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998.

Farley, E. *Theologia: Fragmentation and Unity in Theological Education*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

Fedorov, Vladimir. 'Perspectives of ecumenical cooperation in Theological Education in Eastern and Central Europe' on the WCC website; accessed on 22 May 2012 at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ete/wocati/perspectives-of-ecumenical-cooperation-in-theological-education-in-eastern-and-central-europe-dr-vladimir-fedorov>

FitzGerald, Thomas E. *The ecumenical movement: an introductory history*. Westport: Praeger, 2004.

FitzGerald, Thomas E. 'The Patriarchal Encyclicals on Christian Unity'. In *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 22:3 (1977).

Florovsky, Georges (Father). 'On the Veneration of the Saints' on the *Orthodox Christian Information Centre* site. Accessed on 15 April 2008. http://Orthodoxinfo.com/general/florov_veneration.aspx.

Florovsky, Georges (Father). *Ecumenism I. A doctrinal approach* (Volume Thirteen in the *Collected works of Georges Florovsky*). Vaduz: Buchervertriebsanstalt, 1989.

French, R.M. *The Eastern Orthodox Church*. London: Hutchinson & Co, 1964.

Gholam, Samir and Frost, David (Trans.). *A Pastoral Guide to the Holy Mysteries*. The British Antiochian Orthodox Deanery, Cambridge: Aquila Books, 2001.

Gill, David, ed. *Gathered for Life: Official Report, VI Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1983.

Goodall, Norman. *The Ecumenical Movement. What it is and what it does*. Oxford: OUP, London, 1964.

Graham, E. L., H. Walton and F. Ward. *Theological Reflections: Methods*. London: SCM, 2005.

Gros, Jeffrey, and McManus, Eamon, and Riggs, Ann. *Introduction to Ecumenism*. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.

Heers, Peter Alban (Fr.), 'The Missionary Origins of Modern Ecumenism. Milestones leading up to 1920' (An address prepared for the Academic Conference, The Mission of the Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, Athens, May 15, 2005). Accessed on 1 February 2012. <http://Orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/Heers-TheMissionaryRootsofModernEcumenism.pdf>.

Hierotheos (Metropolitan of Nafpaktos). *Orthodox Spirituality. A Brief Introduction*. Leviaia: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1994.

Hobsbawm, E. *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987.

Hunsinger, George. *The Eucharist and Ecumenism. Let us keep the feast*. Cambridge: CUP, 2008.

Ingle-Gillis, William C. *The Trinity and Ecumenical Church Thought. The Church-Event*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Jillions, John A. 'Orthodox Christianity in the West: the ecumenical challenge'. In *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*. Eds. Cunningham. Mary B. and Theokritoff, Elizabeth. Cambridge: CUP, 2008.

Kinnamon, Michael. *The vision of the Ecumenical Movement: and how it has been impoverished by its friends*. Atlanta: Chalice Press, 2003.

Kokkinakis, Athenagoras T. *The Thyateira confession: The faith and prayer of Orthodox Christians*. London: Faith Press, 1975.

Limouris, Gennadios. *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994.

Lossky, Nicholas et al, ed. *Dictionary of ecumenical movement*. Geneva: WCC Publications; London: Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, 1991.

Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. London: James Clarke, 1991.

Louth, Andrew. *Eastern Orthodox Theology*. London: SPCK, 2013.

Macris, George P. *The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement During the Period 1920-1969*. Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 1986.

Mantzaridis, Georgios I. *The Deification of Man. St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*. Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984.

McGuckin, John Anthony. 'Deification in Greek Patristic Thought: The Cappadocian Fathers' Strategic Adaptation of a Tradition'. In Christensen, M. & Wittung J. (ed), *Partakers of the Divine Nature. The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition*. Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007.

McGuckin, John Anthony. *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.

Methuen, Charlotte. 'Lambeth 1920: The Appeal to All Christian people. An Account by G. K. A. Bell and the redactions of the Appeal'. In *From the Reformation to the Permissive Society. A Miscellany in Celebration of the 400th Anniversary of Lambeth Palace Library*, edited by Barber, Melanie et al. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, Church of England Records Society, 2010.

Meyendorff, John. *The Orthodox Church. Its past and its role in the world today*. Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981. Also the 'Foreword' to the 1960 edition, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1960.

Monroe, Kelly, ed. *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

Morris, Jeremy. *The Church in the Modern Age*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007.

Morris, Jeremy. 'Edinburgh 1910-2010: A Retrospective Assessment', in *Ecclesiology* 7 (2011), pp. 297-316.

Murray, Paul D. (ed.). *Receptive ecumenism and the call to Catholic learning. Exploring a way for contemporary ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Nikodim (Metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod). 'The Russian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement'. In *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1902-1975*. The World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1978.

Nissiotis, Nikos. 'The Witness and the Service of Eastern Orthodoxy to the One Undivided Church'. In *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1902-1975*. Geneva: The World Council of Churches, 1978.

Oxley, Simon. *Creative ecumenical Education: Learning from One Another*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002.

Paul, Archbishop of Finland. *The faith we hold*. Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980.

Philaret (Metropolitan). 'The Thyateira Confession' ('Third Sorrowful Epistle'). Accessed on 2 April 2013. <http://Orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/sorrow3.aspx>

Popovich, Justin (Father). *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*. Belmont: Institute of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1994.

Potter, Philip. 'Barmen--an Ecumenical Response'. In *Ecumenical Review* 36 (1984):421-423.

Rahner, K. *Theology of Pastoral Action*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968.

Raiser, Konrad. *Ecumenism in transition : a paradigm shift in the ecumenical movement?* Geneva : WCC Publications, 1991.

Reeves, John (Father). 'The Price of Ecumenism. How Ecumenism Has Hurt the Orthodox Church'. Accessed on 21 September 2008.
http://Orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/tca_priceofecumenism.aspx

Riabykh, Philip (Hegumen). 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Ecumenism'. In *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 46:3, Summer 2011.

Rouse, Ruth. 'Voluntary Movements and the Changing Ecumenical Climate'. In *A History of the ecumenical movement, 1517-1948*, ed. Rouse and Neill. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993.

Rowdon, Harold H. 'Edinburgh 1910, Evangelicals and the ecumenical movement'. In *Vox Evangelica* 5, 1967.

Sagovsky, Nicholas. *Ecumenism, Christian origins and the practice of communion*. Cambridge: CUP, 2000.

Sauca, Ioan. 'The Church beyond our boundaries. The ecumenical vocation of Orthodoxy.' In *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 56 No. 2, April 2004.

Schaeffer, Frank. *Dancing Alone: The Quest for Orthodox Faith in the Age of False Religion*. Holy Cross Press: Brookline, Massachusetts, 1994.

Schmemmann, Alexander. *Church, World, Mission. Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West*. Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979.

Smith, Elwyn A. 'Editorial', in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 4, 1967.

Sophrony (Archimandrite). *His Life is Mine*. London and Oxford: Mowbrays, 1977.

Staniloae, Dumitru. 'Câteva trăsături caracteristice ale Ortodoxiei' ('A few characteristic features of Orthodoxy'). In *Mitropolia Olteniei*, 1970, No. 7-8, pp. 730-738.

Staniloae, Dumitru. *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: The Experience of God, Vol. 1: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God*. Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005.

Staniloae, Dumitru. *Teologia Dogmatica Ortodoxa. Vol. II*. Bucharest: Institutul Biblic si de Misiune al BOR, 2003.

Staniloae, Dumitru. *Teologie Dogmatica Ortodoxa. vol. III.* Bucharest: Institutul Biblic si de Misiune al BOR, 2003.

Staniloae, Dumitru. *Theology and the Church.* Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980.

Tanner, Dr Mary. 'The Work of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation', published online by The Society for Ecumenical Studies. Accessed on 2 April 2010. <http://sfes.faithweb.com/0211tannerwcc&orthodoxy.pdf>.

Thiessen, Gesa Elsbeth (ed.). *Ecumenical Ecclesiology: Unity, Diversity and Otherness in a Fragmented World.* London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009.

Tillard, J. M. R. 'Elements of unity in recent ecumenical discussion'. In *One in Christ*, 1978, 94-105.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Theology in reconciliation. Essays towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975.

Vassiliadis, Petros (ed.). *Oikumene and Theology: The 1993-95 Erasmus Lectures in Ecumenical Theology.* Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1996.

Wainwright, Geoffrey. *The Ecumenical Movement: Crisis and Opportunity for the Church.* Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983.

Ware, Kallistos. *The Orthodox Way.* Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.

Ware, Timothy. *The Orthodox Church.* Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976.

Wieser, Thomas, ed. *Whither Ecumenism? A Dialogue in the Transit Lounge of the Ecumenical Movement.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986.

Williams, Rowan. "'May they all be one' ...but how? A vision for the future of Christian unity' - Ecumenical Conference Held in St Albans Cathedral on 17 May 2003. Accessed on 1 May 2014 at <http://sfes.faithweb.com/0305williamssummary.pdf>.

Yannaras, Christos. *Elements of Faith. An Introduction to Orthodox Theology.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.

Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion. Studies in the Personhood of the Church.* Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.

Primary Sources

The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments. Revised Standard Version. London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1970.

The Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom. Ephrem Lash (trans.). Oxford University Press, 1995.

Other Sources

'An Online Orthodox Catechism' on the website of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. Accessed on 20 March 2013.
<http://Orthodoxeurope.org/page/10/1.aspx#40>

'Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox', on the website of the Department for External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church. Accessed on 31 January 2013.
<http://mospat.ru/en/documents/attitude-to-the-non-Orthodox>.

'Decree on Ecumenism. *Unitatis Redintegratio*'. Accessed on 30 March 2012.
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html.

'Ecumenism today. A survey by the RC/WCC Joint Working Group', *One in Christ*, 11, 30-87.

Encyclopaedia Britannica. Accessed on 10 April 2013.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/603196/transubstantiation>.

New Delhi Statement on Unity, and Orthodox Response Third Assembly of the WCC, New Delhi, 1961. Accessed on the WCC website on 1 September 2013. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/crete-02-e.html>.

'The Thessaloniki Statement', WCC website. Accessed on 10 May 2012.
<http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/ecumenical-movement-in-the-21st-century/member-churches/special-commission-on-participation-of-Orthodox-churches/first-plenary-meeting-documents-december-1999/thessaloniki-statement.html>

'The Toronto Statement'. Accessed on 1 June 2012.
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/toronto-1950/toronto-statement.html>.

The Toronto Statement, The World Council of Churches. Accessed on 1 March 2012.
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/toronto-1950/toronto-statement.html>.